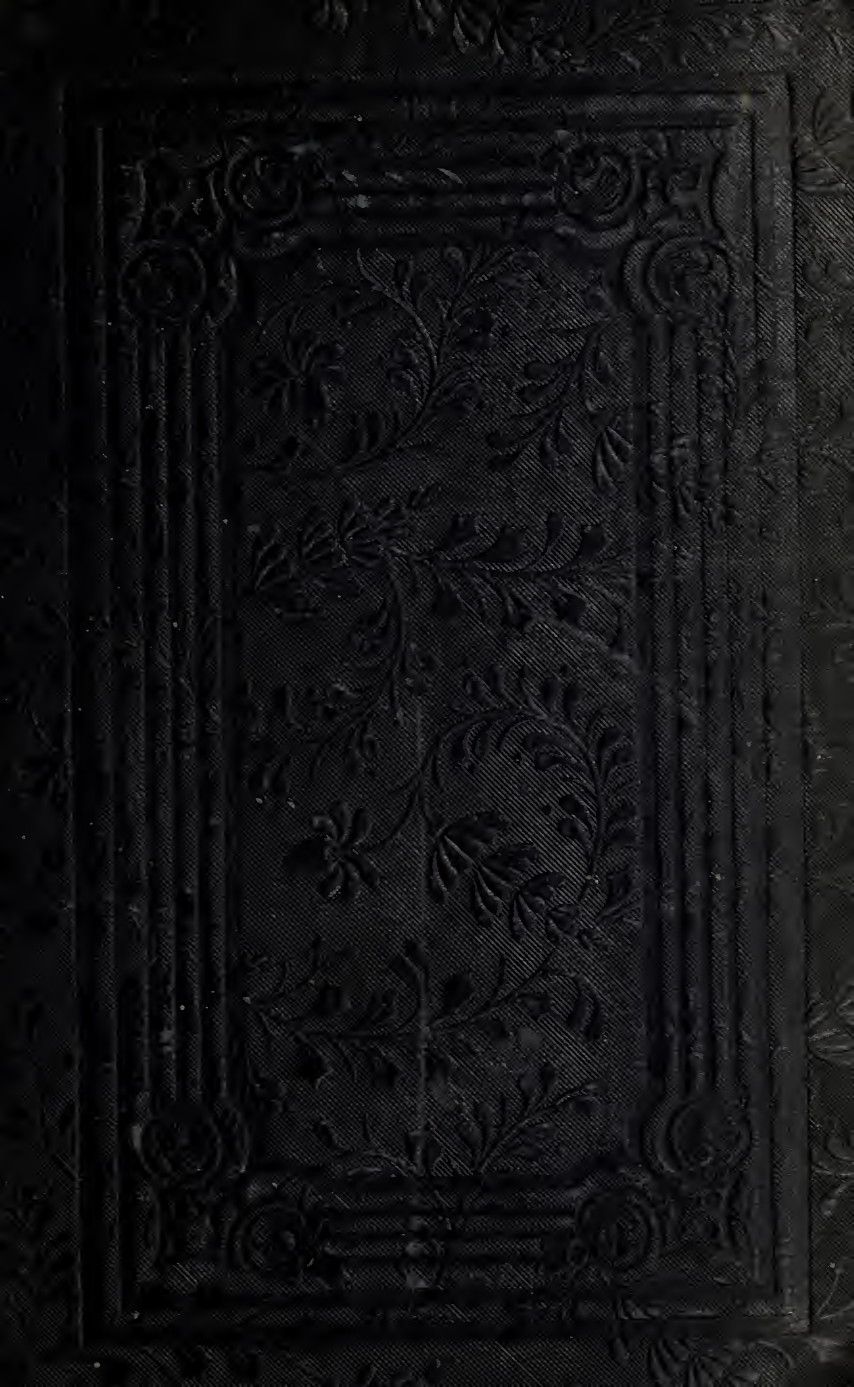

Recd. at the Dept. of State
7th April, 1839.

No. 768

AUTHENTICITY

OF THE

NEW TESTAMENT.

THE

AUTHENTICITY

OF THE

NEW TESTAMENT.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

OF

J. E. CELLERIER, Jr.
PROFESSOR OF CRITICISM AND SACRED ANTIQUITIES, IN THE ACADEMY OF GENEVA.

WITH

NOTES AND REFERENCES,

BY

A SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER.

Le dessein de ceux qui exercent cet art (la critique sacrée) n'est pas de détruire, mais d' établir.—*R. Simon; Hist. Crit. du texte du N. T.*

BOSTON:
WEEKS, JORDAN AND COMPANY.
1838.

Tuttle, Dennett & Chisholm, Printers.

TO THE

TEACHERS AND PUPILS

OF THE

WARREN STREET CHAPEL,

AND

SOUTH CONGREGATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL,

THIS LITTLE TREATISE

IS

RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY

INSCRIBED,

BY

THE TRANSLATOR.

PREFACE.

The translator of this work, being desirous of introducing to his class an interesting treatise on the evidences of christianity, which should engage the attention of his young friends, and at the same time ensure a good result, from the study of what he considered an essential part of a thorough religious education, was led to examine various books upon the subject. His researches and his impressions soon caused him to doubt whether a work suitable to be introduced to his class could be found. Many good treatises upon the subject have been issued from the press, but few or none adapted to the Sunday School.

The translator wished to find a work, which

clothed in a simple and plain language, and written in an easy and interesting style, would present this great subject under such a varied point of view, as should render every side of the question familiar to his pupils. The admirable works of Paley and Norton seemed best adapted to the purpose. But the innumerable examples and dry details of the former, and the close reasoning and logical deductions of the latter, deduced from a long series of propositions, difficult to be followed and understood by the young, induced him to look farther before a decision should be made.

At this period of his search the little work of Cellerier was placed in his hands. At the first examination of its contents it appeared to be the the very book desired. It was translated; and the interest with which his pupils listened to its pages, the joy and animation which beamed from their countenances, as the work developed the beautiful character of the Saviour, the wonderful history of the Apostles, and the powerful proofs for the authenticity of their works, and the honesty of their intentions, convinced him that his first impressions were not erroneous.

The interest which his own pupils manifested in the work led the translator to think, that it might be useful to other children; and in the hope that it might prove an auxiliary in the important labors of the Sunday School, he was induced to send it to the press.

Several additional references and notes have been made to the original, both in the body of the book and at its close. Several quotations have likewise been made from the works of Professor Norton and others. This was done for the purpose, of making additional illustratious, and to introduce also to the reader other works upon the same subject. The treatise of Cellerier, by no means, exhausts the subject. It may, perhaps, be all that is necessary to be studied in the Sunday School, but to those who wish to examine the subject more completely and thoroughly, it can be considered, as an introduction only to larger and more comprehensive works.

To such persons — and every Sunday School Teacher should be included in the number — the "Evidences" and "Horæ Paulinæ," of Paley, will possess the highest interest. The noble work

of Professor Norton, also, when completed, will probably be a text book to every enlightened and sincere christian, as it will undoubtedly be, an honor to the literature of our country and age.

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CHAPTER II.

DISCOURSE.

DISCOURSE

UPON

THE AUTHENTIC AND DIVINE ORIGIN

OF THE

NEW TESTAMENT.

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order, a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye witnesses and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.—*Luke* i. 1—4.

To know the certainty of those things in which he has been instructed is the first duty of a christian. It is often necessary for him amid the trials and shoals of life, to have a knowledge of those things which he believes. In the midst of the darkness which envelopes his whole existence, he requires an infallible guide to regulate his conduct, ra his courage, and direct his steps in safety. He has need of having the truth of the gospel convince his reason and satisfy his heart. Such, my friends, is the impression which will result from the words of our text, if, in our weakness we are able to explain them aright.

In the preface to his gospel, St. Luke addresses a distinguished christian named Theophilus. He declares and proves to him, in a few words, the truth of those great events which he is about to announce. It is to us, also, these words are addressed. We will commence the interpretation of the gospel history, in demonstrating to you its truth, by the same means which the sacred historian employs. Although, like Theophilus, you are not able to assure yourself with your own eyes, yet if you approach this inquiry with a sincere heart and right mind, you will carry away with you that unshaken confidence, so necessary for a christian.

First of all, let us examine as briefly as possible, the words of our text, as they furnish the means and plan of our undertaking.

"Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order, a declaration of those things." It is generally believed that this is an allusion to certain apocryphal writings of great antiquity. Let it be remembered, however, that two* only of these writings can be traced back as far as the time of the apostles; and that the sacred author had in view other relations of the evangelical history, written by faithful christians, is neither affirmed nor denied by any testimony. Taking these circum-

* "*The Book of the Hebrews*," and "the Book of the Egyptians." The first is, without doubt, a disfigured copy of the gospel of St. Matthew; the second is but little known. The fragments which remain are far from being imbued with the spirit of the gospel.

stances into consideration, and reflecting also upon his design, it would seem more probable he had principally in his mind, the gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark.

"Which are most surely believed among us." It appears from this, that in Palestine and the country around, the truth of the gospel was known and acknowledged.

"Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eye witnesses and ministers of the word." A new allusion to the writings of Mark and Matthew, a new testimony that Luke gave them credit, and gave it as to eye witnesses.

"It seemed good to me, also having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus." If St. Luke commences then a new gospel, it is because he wishes to make a complete work, having all the events wihch should be contained in it, placed in their proper order.

"That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed." This then is the design of the evangelist. And in order that it may be accomplished, he immediately places his own gospel in the hands of Theophilus, and at the same time appeals in it to others as to works of the ministry of the word; he then declares that they and he were eye witnesses, or exactly informed concerning each event. From these cir-

cumstances, Luke believes himself right in concluding that the evangelical history is true. Let us follow out and develop the same train of thought. The certainty of the authenticity of the gospels. The certainty of the knowledge of the event, as recorded by the Evangelist. And, resulting from these, the truth of the evangelical history.

PART FIRST.

Certainty of the authenticity of the Gospels.

The certainty of the authenticity of the gospel! Is it then necessary to have this proved? What ancient work is authentic, if the gospels are not? Indeed, if any circumstance is embarrassing in our undertaking, it is the choice of proof. What kind of demonstration do you desire? Is it of testimony, of sentiment, of criticism, of authority? Do you wish historical testimony? Behold the immediate disciples of the apostles, and many other witnesses. Behold those learned and wise men, or those distinguished for their good faith. Providence has preserved to us some precious fragments of their writings. Some of these appeal to the words of the gospel as to sacred authority; some name their authors, and all proclaim with a powerful voice, their authenticity, which no one indeed, in the first

age, thought of denying. If the authority of the defenders of christianity does not appear to you to be sufficient, we will call to our aid that of its adversaries. Those famous heretics, and formidable enemies who attempted to stifle in its infancy, and obscure by their errors, the new born Christianity. Celsus Marcion, Valentine, Basilides, and many others, whose names alone recall their audacity or incredulity. These are the witnesses we have summoned. The proof we draw from their works, is complete. These men, who made so many efforts to enfeeble the authority of the gospels, who, if the books had not been authentic, would have necessarily known, and could have easily proved, these men, whose interest urged them so strongly to the work, did not perceive the possibility, they did not indeed think of it. It is from the writings of Matthew, of Mark, of Luke, and of John, they wish to draw the objections and contradictions, which are to convince us of the weakness and error of the apostles of Christ. What is the result of their labors? They not only fail in casting the least shadow over the truth of christiantity, but they demonstrate to our day its authenticity. They are condemned to assure its triumph.

Do you wish proof of another kind? Do you wish with the critic to analyze even the words of the sacred writings, and descend to the most insignificant details, in order to discover from their

secret reports, the presence of error or the seal of truth? This examination is so much the more decisive, since it never fails in detecting imposture. For there never yet has appeared an imposter, who has been able completely, to imitate the language and conjecture the situation of him, under whose name he wished to pass off his own writings. The most celebrated historians, indeed, when they have spoken of former times, have not been able to avoid those mistakes of names, of manners, of years or of places, to which a distance of some ages necessarily renders them liable. It is here, my friends, that the triumph of the gospel and its authenticity is completely made manifest. These gospels which bear the names of men surrounded by such extraordinary circumstances — placed between the Jewish and Roman manners — between the Hebrew and Greek languages — between the first invasion of the Romans and the overthrow of Judea under the Cæsars — these gospels, which, if they are authentic, ought to carry the seal of a country, of an age and a position, to which we can find no parallel, have, for a long series of years, under this point of view, been the object of the most profound discussion, and the most industrious researches. And yet they stand firm against all opposition.

Let us glance at several of the remarkable coincidences we find in the gospels.

1. Coincidences of time. Here are several towns, the names of which were changed twice; a few years before, and a few years after the coming of Jesus Christ, and which bear in our gospel precisely the names they bore at the time it was written, and at that time only. There are the Jewish and Roman coins, which we behold in use at the same time, the former, however, for the tribute which was paid to the priests: the latter for that which Cæsar demanded. These are remarkable circumstances, which could not have been met with excepting at that time, and which an imposter would never have considered.

2. Coincidences of persons. Antiquity informs us that Matthew wrote for the Hebrews, and we behold him appealing constantly, and more than any other, to the ancient oracles of the Hebrews. Antiquity tells us that Mark wrote for the Romans, and we behold him employing Latin words, and describing particularly the situation and distances of various parts of his country, as if his readers were strangers to the customs of Palestine. Antiquity informs us that Luke was a physician, being of course, more learned than the other evangelists; and we have a more complete and methodical work, written indeed as a learned man would write after obtaining exact information upon this subject.

3. Coincidences of deeds. There is the wife of Pilate, who, according to the Evangelist, was at

Jerusalem; and we learn from Tacitus,* that if Augustus had forbidden the proconsuls bringing their wives with them, the prohibition had been removed by Tiberius. There are the publicans whom Jesus called or converted at Capernaum, and at Jericho, and we learn from another source, that the Roman customs were established precisely in these two cities, and that the Jews were the agents.

But of what consequence is it, to pursue any farther this long and always incomplete enumeration. As regards coincidences of places, manners and language, the riches of the gospel are immense; but by pursuing this point farther, we should weary your attention, long before we finished our task.

What do you now demand, my friends? Do you wish an imposing authority, and a long possession of glorious triumphs? St. John had not left the earth when the gospels, designated by the names of their four authors, ruled every where in the church, the conduct and faith of believers. Ages passed away. Each generation, in its turn, brought to them its tribute of homage; each generation received them as the report of the ministers of the word. Soon, however, the church extended and was divided; sects were created and multiplied; Greeks and Barbarians, the nations of the east and the west, were opposed to each other in government, in manners and in faith. All

* Tacit. Annal, I. 40, 41; II. 54, 55; III. 33, 34.

christians, however, of the known world, agreed in receiving as undoubted and authentic, the writings of the disciples, and to them they went, to seek, alike, a foundation for their faith, and an excuse for their errors.

In the midst of this clashing of opinions and passions, what voice is elevated against the gospel? Not one. Friends and enemies render it equal homage. But in our day, we have beheld that which our fathers did not. We have beheld men, some blinded by hate, others puffed up by imaginary knowledge, or rather led astray by example, by authority and by false lights, mingling falsehood with truth, answering to proofs by doubts, to reason by supposition, overthrowing all received ideas — carrying against the gospels an audacious hand, and denouncing them to the world as a collection of false traditions. But wherefore should we be astonished? This same frenzy for maintaining opinions different from the rest of the world, has endeavored to wrest from the greatest geniuses of ancient times, their renown and most glorious works. And what have all these labors effected? What have they accomplished, uniting against the gospel, science, genius, audacity and celebrity? They have amused the curious, frightened the feeble minded, and seduced some to their belief. A controversy has at length commenced. Assertions have been reduced to their proper value, the torch of truth has been

lighted, the edifice which had just begun to be elevated has fallen, and its scattered ruins render a new homage to the authenticity of the gospel — the homage of science conquered by science itself and of hate reduced to silence.*

Are not these united proofs sufficiently strong? If not, we have those more powerful, yes, more powerful, since they rely upon human nature and the language of truth. Read, read the gospels — and then ask yourselves if they are the work of an imposter; read those narrations marked by so much candor and simplicity. Behold the manner in which the apostles relate those things they had witnessed. They make no comment; they do not seek to create any effect; and so far from endeavoring to prevent any doubts arising upon the subject, they do not seem even to have anticipated them. Read those discourses of the Saviour, so superior to the prejudices of the synagogue,

* In reading the above, we must remember under what circumstances our author wrote. The meaning will then be perfectly obvious to all. He resides at Geneva, in the neighborhood of France, in the very centre, as it were, of the theatre of that terrible convulsion in religion and opinion, which agitated this unfortunate country at the period of the first revolution. The effects of the writings of Voltaire and his school upon a nation were so remarkable that they must ever be regarded with astonishment by the sincere christian. That period of darkness has passed away. A brighter day has dawned upon France, and in the foremost rank of the champions of christianity, we behold those whose early labors and opinions placed them among her adversaries. The great work of Constant, which has done so much on the continent of Europe, to stay the tide of infidelity, we are informed, is the result of labors commenced with the design of opposing those great truths, which it has so ably advocated.

and the doctrines of the pagans. Read those discourses reported without comment, without any word of astonishment or even of admiration, but which carry, however, on their front the impress of the heaven from which they have descended. Read those lessons which the gospels teach — so extraordinary, so simple, so noble, so easy to be comprehended by all, and then say, if you can, that it is a work of the imagination. Would an imposter have written with such simplicity? Would he not have erased many of the particular details, and materially altered others? In a word, is it thus any one would have invented?

If you approach this work with a heart that is peaceful and right, if you carry to it, the sure and calm judgment of him who seeks the truth, and possess those qualifications which it is necessary for him to have who would find it; if you do not pretend to understand every thing upon this great subject, but know how to recognise the language of truth, and appreciate objections at their proper value; if you draw near to God in this work, and abandon yourself to the impressions which will be excited, we have nothing more to say to you. No, my friends, truth has not two languages. She makes herself felt in the heart of him who loves her, with a power it would be impossible to imitate. Yes, our gospels are authentic. Never was there a history better demonstrated. They are

authentic, or there is nothing certain in criticism or history;—or the moral sense leads us astray, and common sense deceives us. They are true. After so many ages — so many researches — so many proofs — ignorance, disquiet, thoughtlessness and pride can only doubt.

PART SECOND.

The certainty of the knowledge of the Evangelists.

The gospels are authentic, but were the Evangelists well informed in those things, concerning which they have written? We will not yet answer as fully as a christian can answer. We will first judge the Evangelists as ordinary historians, and make it manifest that even then the knowledge they possessed, should place them beyond suspicion.

For a corroboration of this assertion, I appeal to their persons. Who are they, these, the historians of Christ? They are his neighbors, his friends, his companions; they live with him, accompany him in his journeyings, are witnesses of his miracles, they are indeed his apostles or the friends and associates of the apostles. The first who presents himself dwelt at Capernaum, in the same village where Jesus sojourned, near to Nazareth where he was brought up, upon the border of the lake of Tiberias, the theatre of his preaching and miracles;

called by Jesus almost at the commencement of his ministry, he from that time constantly followed him, and can present himself with confidence as his historian.

The second is a young man brought up by the apostles, and a witness perhaps, with them, of those things he was afterwards destined to recount. A son of that devout woman whose house served as an asylum for the disciples of Christ, a cousin of Barnabas, the companion of Paul, and being moreover the associate and secretary of Simon Peter. Mark has written not only those things which he knew or beheld, but that which Peter dictated to him. On this account, Peter, the most zealous of all the disciples and the privileged witness of the transfiguration, has been regarded by all ancient authorities, as the true author of the gospel according to St. Mark.

The third Evangelist is early associated with the apostles in their labors. We cannot however, affirm that he beheld the facts which he has related; there is nothing in his writings which affirms it, nor is there anything which proves the contrary. But it is certain, that, consecrating to the work of Christ, his time and his life, a friend of the apostles and companion of Paul, writing his gospel after thirty years of friendship and union, he had no want of opportunity to become well acquainted with those things which he has related.

The last is John, *the disciple who reposed upon the bosom of Jesus*, the well beloved disciple who shared the privileges of Peter, who alone had the courage to follow his master under the cross, who received his last sigh, ran the first to the sepulchre and to whose care Jesus left his mother. These are our historians.

I now appeal to their writings. The relations of an eye witness have a life and naturalness peculiar to themselves. The narrator omits neither the movements of the actors, nor the aspect of the scene. He retraces a thousand little circumstances, which his memory constantly associates with the principal deed, but of which another would never have dreamed. Who has not remarked in our gospels, this circumstance, which can be perceived even through a translation? How can it be denied, that the Evangelists knew as eye witnesses, the transactions which they have related, or at least were exactly informed even in the smallest particulars. Look at the account which John gives of those affecting scenes which followed the resurrection of Jesus. What ingenuousness, what perfect simplicity in the emotion of that holy woman,* who sought the Saviour, turned back, saw him, yet did not know him, so much the last shadows of night and her own tears obscured her sight. How much does that simple, yet sublime dialogue of two words express, "Mary," "My master."

*John xx, 10—17.

Moreover how much do those scenes in which the Evangelist had been himself a spectator, or actor, carry by their artlessness and minute fidelity, the evidence of an eye witness and exact narrator. The apostle is not named, but see how he discloses himself, in speaking of the "other disciple" who ran with Peter to the sepulchre from which Jesus had lately risen.* Give that scene to a writer of fiction; he will describe to you, without doubt, in lofty language, or with a sensibility, perhaps cleverly imitated, the emotion of the apostles in approaching the sepulchre of their Master — their uneasy look scrutinizing with eagerness the opened tomb, the trouble of the guilty and penitent Peter, and the august scenes which awaited the disciples at that moment of the triumph of Jesus, when he was solemnly declared the Son of God. But these, the artifices of a skilful and ready imagination, are unknown to our true historian. He recounts simply his own actions and feelings, and those circumstances which he himself beheld. The two apostles departed together; John arrived first, but did not enter; Peter, coming more slowly, arrived afterwards, and entered the sepulchre; the linen clothes are upon the ground, the napkin is folded up and laid apart. It is easy to imagine, perhaps, the troubled mind of the son of Jonas, but John says nothing concerning it, he does not ap-

* John 20, 3—8.

pear to have perceived it; he has given us an account of that only which he personally experienced. He says that he "saw and believed." They departed without having seen Jesus.

Open St. Mark, and read whatever first meets your eye. What truth and life in all his relations. It is of little importance whether they are to be attributed to him or St. Peter; the result is the same. This character of minute fidelity is imprinted upon the whole book; in all those portions at least, where, instead of slightly recalling to his recollection the transactions, he relates them with considerable detail. Does he speak of the woman healed by touching the garment of Jesus,* or of the unhappy son whom an evil spirit tormented,— he appears yet to behold the movements of the Saviour — the eagerness, the tears, the emotions of the actor; his ears yet preserve the impression of the voice of the Saviour, when he had command over nature, and snatched from the sepulchre its prey: "Effata, Talisha koumi!"† He repeats these words in the same language in which Jesus pronounced them, as he heard them at first, and as he afterwards, when writing, seemed still to hear.

I appeal to their testimony. St. Luke tells us that these things were "most surely believed amongst them;" he declares that he had "a perfect understanding of all things from the very first;"

* Mark v. 25—34. †Mark v. 41; vii. 34.

and with regard to the other evangelists, "that from the beginning, they were eye witnesses." Why should this testimony be doubted? Indeed, after what principles do you appreciate the declarations of a profane writer? If they are in agreement with his writings and his situation, if they demonstrate his good faith, they are precious documents, and carry their own proof. Is not the testimony of our evangelists, at least, as good as that of an ordinary writer? Under what circumstances, moreover, do they render that testimony. They are at the foot of the cross, ready to follow their master. They are able, however, they are able with one word, to extinguish the pile and break their chains. But in this position, and to defend their preaching, even when dying, they exclaim, "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, declare we unto you."* "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye witnesses of his majesty."† "For one cannot but speak the things we have seen and heard."‡ And shall we not believe them? Indeed, if they speak otherwise, if they accuse themselves of ignorance and imposture, even then we ought to refuse them our credit, and

* 1 John i. 1. † 2 Peter, 1—16. ‡ Acts iv. 20.

impute their denial to the executioner. But this is not required — they continue firm and die.

I ask you now, my friends, are we not right in affirming that they are well informed? Can there yet remain any doubt? But if on the one hand, the gospels are authentic, and on the other hand the evangelists are well informed, is it not yet possible to doubt that the evangelical history is true. This remains for our examination.

PART THIRD.

The Certainty of the Evangelical History.

If you wish to judge aright, my friends, convey yourselves in imagination to the country of Theophilus, or rather suppose in that, wherever you may be, separated by time and distance from the origin of christianity, you have had only a confused account of Christ and his religion. Suddenly, a follower of Jesus presents to you the gospels, and informs you of the proof for their authenticity. What would be the thoughts which would crowd upon your mind in examining them? Here then is the history of Christ. It is authentic and dates from the time of the Saviour. It is the work of the companions of his labors. But wherefore do I speak of one history alone. Behold in my possession, four different and parallel histories, written by four contemporaneous historians, who give a relation of the

same transactions, but with some particular circumstances, or in an order a little different, precisely, indeed, as they appeared to each. Where shall I find any facts so well authenticated? Have I ever had any doubts concerning the history of Alexander or Augustus, and yet no contemporary historian has transmitted it to me. But here we have four contemporaneous historians, four associates of the Saviour; men who beheld all this themselves, and constituted an important part of that which they relate. We certainly can find no other actions so well attested.

Can I believe that they wished to deceive? They deceive! with that tone of good faith, that genuine simplicity, that absence of artifice and ostentation! They, poor, suffering, persecuted, deceive to obtain contempt and death!

Did they not, however, deceive themselves! — What, during sixty years they believed that miracles were performed, the church believed it with them, and they were deceived! Was he also deceived, that lame person, who, in the name of Jesus of Nazareth, recovered the use of his limbs? Was she deceived, that mother, who saw her son lying in death, then pressed him in her arms full of life? Never has history rested upon like foundations; we say farther, it is not possible for historical truth to be better demonstrated.

Moreover, when examining these books still more closely, you will find in the nature of the things

they contain, that which is at once an important result, and a new proof. These books contain the positive declaration, that it was the Spirit of God which enlightened the apostles. *These things which the ministers of the word relate, are the things which the Spirit of God gave them the power of doing.* These men of themselves were ignorant and timid; the Spirit of God changed them into prophets and martyrs; God himself was with them. This truth is inseparable from the history; it is, in fact, its foundation and essence; and if then these things are certain, if the evangelical history does not rest upon falsehood, it is evident that God himself was the instructer of these writers. *Divine inspiration,* a necessary, though mediate consequence, of the authenticity of the gospels, is an important doctrine, which being the rampart of christianity, the foundation and support of the protestant faith, forms a decisive boundary between all classes of the skeptical on one side, and all sects of christians on the other. This divine inspiration, proved by a series of facts, confirmed by the declarations of the Saviour and his apostles, reacts in its turn upon this same history of which it is the consequence, giving us a firmer faith, a more entire confidence, and a sweeter and profounder peace. Yes, it is not upon the word of man, it is upon the word of God himself, that you rely. Let us give thanks to him that he has given us an evidence equal to his revelation. He has willed that if man has yet some labor to

perform, in order to assure himself of the authenticity of that revelation, he shall be able to recognise it by certain and undoubted signs. The gospel is true. It comes, bringing consolation to the unhappy whom the world abandons, assuaging the grief of the sick, sustaining the dying. How much joy must Theophilus have experienced in reading these divine writings, in contemplating one after another, the powerful proofs for their truth and divine origin, in discovering thus, at once, that he was a child of God, saved by divine grace, and rendered immortal. My friends, we also have been declared heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ. For us also is the chart of safety, and the good news. For us also the gospel is true. Let us be of good cheer, and, retaining firmly the hope which is in us, our sorrows will be changed to a voice of hope and love. You, whom a troubled conscience deprives of rest, let your repentant heart elevate itself with confidence to him who has attached to his cross the act of our condemnation. You, who weep under a load of misery, recollect that the gospel is announced to the poor, and that the gospel is true. You, whom an unquiet mind has not yet permitted to find at the feet of Christ, conviction and faith, know that the gospel is true, and that doubt is not permitted to him who examines, reasons and feels. Be of good cheer, children of the dust, there are no more doubts without conviction, no more griefs

without a remedy, no faults without pardon; the good tidings are proclaimed, and the gospel is true. Yes, my friends, as surely as we are now alive, and are soon to die and pass to the judgment, as surely as for our sins we have need of pardon, so surely Christ has died for our transgressions, and risen for our justification, so surely our master has suffered, leaving us an example, that we may follow in his footsteps, so surely is he sitting at the right hand of the Father, and preparing for us places by his side.

My friends, fellow travellers through the journey and trials of life, it is necessary to preserve and defend as our most precious treasure, it is necessary to study and love as our highest title of glory, that gospel which is the gift of God. Let us be careful and never permit that confidence in its truth, that fervor of thankfulness and of faith, that boundless submission of a sincere and devout heart, without which it will avail us nothing, ever to become enfeebled and extinguished. How can the gospel console us in adversity, if it be not our constant companion, always maintaining its power over our hearts, always present to our thoughts? How can it make us victorious over the world, if it has not taught us to subdue ourselves? It is necessary to render its lessons familiar, to recur to them frequently and with pleasure, to have them, if I may so say, impressed upon our heart, in order that they

may maintain a constant influence, and exercise a kind control. If it be a stranger who counsels instead of a master who commands, it cannot aid us in contending against the enemies of our soul; if we behold it with indifference and treat it with neglect, it will not metamorphose itself suddenly, at the day of need, into a hopeful, intimate, and powerful friend. Let it not be to us a useless and lifeless book; may it be a precious pearl which it is necessary to obtain at any price; — the tree, whose refreshing shade shelters the whole human family. While we hide the treasure in the earth, it is carried by pious hands to the east and the west, its blessed words scattered liberally wherever man is found, are making, day by day, by their own inward power, new conquests to the faith. Already, distant islands are peopled by christians. Already, those savage shores, which eternal snows cover, or which are burnt up by the scorching sun, resound with the name of Christ. Already, in another hemisphere, the surprised navigator beholds faithful and holy churches arising from the bosom of the ocean. A witness to their charity, their probity, their purity and their zeal, he thinks he has discovered those early christians who had only one heart and one soul, and he seeks to discover by what power a perverse, cruel and dissolute generation have become in one day, a pure, upright and humane people. It seems as if God wished to renew the an-

cient miracles, and to give to his word a second demonstration of power. And shall we, called at the first hour, the eldest in faith, forget our privilege, and neglect those powerful means of salvation? Shall the good tidings be to us useless? God grant that we may be preserved from so great a blindness. May he grant that his gospel may retain over our souls its power, and be the subject of our dearest thought and greatest joy. May it be our support in affliction, our strength in temptation, the guide of our reason, the light of our life. May we study it by day, reflect upon it by night, meditate upon it in our journeyings, explain it to our children, and be obedient to it always. Father in heaven, we implore thy favor upon our intentions and feeble efforts; we implore it upon these religious exercises, upon these thy servants who love to assemble here, and upon those whose duty it is to instruct them. May we hear with devotion the touching and sublime history. May we listen as we ought, to the history of the salvation of the human race. May it fill us with love, with zeal, and with faith. May it transform us into new creatures, and cause us to live, die, and rise christians.

PART FIRST.

PROPOSITIONS RELATIVE TO THE GOSPELS.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

To make amends for the brevity of the preceding discourse, a series of chapters is added, which are designed to recall some interesting facts and important ideas, and unfold several arguments and new results.

The illustrations will be relative to the Gospels, the other books of the New Testament, and to the whole revelation considered under one general point of view. They will thus be presented in three distinct parts.

PART FIRST.

PROPOSITIONS RELATIVE TO THE GOSPELS.

The propositions which are now to occupy our attention relate—

1. To the authenticity of the Gospels;
2. To the veracity of their authors;
3. To their integrity;
4. To the particular nature of each Gospel.

CHAPTER FIRST.

PROPOSITIONS RELATIVE TO THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE GOSPELS.

THE GENERAL PROOFS FOR THEIR AUTHENTICITY.

Our limits will not allow us to unfold them all. I shall confine myself in this chapter, to the mentioning of the various kinds, and shall in the next point out some of the most important.

Before admitting the authenticity of the sacred book, we have a right to demand the same proof and the same certainty, which we demand for the authenticity of profane writings; and we have no more right in one case than in the other, to refuse our assent to the strength of particular proof. The

nature of the book causes no change. We however readily acknowledge that the importance of the subject, and the number and seriousness of the consequences, should render the examination more rigid when it acts upon sacred subjects. The defenders of the sacred books have no cause to fear enlightened, sagacious and impartial adversaries.

The proofs demanded are external and internal, or in other words, historical and critical. These two classes are divided into many others.

Historical proof rests upon *testimony*, when learned and competent witnesses, worthy of credit, and connected with the author by time, place or circumstance, are summoned in favor of the authenticity of any book.

It rests upon *authority*, when the authenticity has been admitted without contradiction, in all places and at all times; or, at least, in those eras and in those places sufficiently proper to decide the question.

Upon the *nature of things*, when circumstances give a strong probability to the hypothesis of their authenticity, and render an error impossible or at least very improbable.

Critical proof rests sometimes upon a resemblance of style and ideas, between the book under examination and other writings by the same author. Sometimes, upon the absence of anachronisms and errors. Sometimes, upon that tone of candor and

naturalness which imposture cannot imitate, and upon those confessions and ingenuous expressions which are impressed with such good faith, that they necessarily carry conviction to the mind of the reader.

To these two great classes of proof we can yet add an indirect one, more decisive and excellent than is generally supposed, namely the small number and feebleness of objections.

There is perhaps no ancient and profane work, which unites all these proofs, at least, in a high degree. In order that a book be recognised as authentic, it is sufficient if it have some of these proofs clearly and decidedly in its favor; and that others, if they be wanting, at least do not prove any thing against it. As regards the gospels, we can affirm that their authenticity rests upon all, and it is notwithstanding the agreement of all that some still obstinately doubt; a perseverance which seems necessarily to suppose a want of judgment, of knowledge or of impartiality. Indeed, if one positive and well established proof be able to satisfy the most rigorous criticism in the absence of all others, what strength must there be in all united. It would seem impossible to regard the gospels as the work of imposture, if even no ancient document rendered its testimony; but the most ancient writings exhibit to us, without dispute, the strongest testimony of the friends and enemies of the faith,

from the east and the west, among christians and pagans, the fathers, and interpreters.

When we pass from historical to critical proof we discover in these books, with yet stronger evidence, the seal of truth: we find also those touches of naturalness and feeling, that intimate connection between the facts and the style, which a sensible, impartial and judicious man cannot resist. When, at last, we examine the objections of adversaries to discover what powerful motives they can have to doubt against such strong evidence, we have exhibited to us only insignificant difficulties or light obscurities, from which no book is exempt.

These different proofs of the authenticity of the gospels do not remain the exclusive property of a few learned men. The result of numerous, various, successive researches, of animated and contradictory discussions, they have been deposited with all their developments, in numerous works, for the examination of the whole world. My design in this volume is to develop only a small number of the most important, and most worthy our attention. For the remainder, I would direct my readers to the works of the following authors.

First of all, I would recommend Paley. He has given considerable space to the question of the authenticity of the gospels, in his treatise upon the evidences of christianity, and there, as in all his writings, he is distinguished by the double merit of

logic and perspicuity. If he was not the first to discover by his own researches, the citations and facts which he has appealed to, as testimony to his assertions, he shows at least all the judgment and knowledge necessary in selecting from the works of others. He excels in the talent of making himself understood; and his calm and methodical reasoning, his sincere and convincing logic, exercise a powerful control over his readers. He quotes upon the authority of Lardner, the critical coincidences of the gospels, and the numerous testimonials which were rendered to these books during the second and third centuries. He classes these evidences and arranges them in an order the most clear and persuasive. He exhibits these writings from their origin, quoted with veneration, distinguished by particular titles, read and publicly explained in religious assemblies, the object of commentaries, of versions and harmonies, universally received by all sects and all parties as authentic documents of the faith of christians. This work is within the reach and should be read by every christian.

Michaelis has discoursed concerning the same question in his "Introduction to the New Testament," in a manner undoubtedly less methodical and even less complete. But this disadvantage is in a great measure compensated by the superiority of the author in originality and learning. In read-

ing his work, we perceive, immediately, that he speaks in his own name and does not make any statement, the truth of which he has not examined for himself. He throws a new light upon his subject by familiar examples; he gives reasons for his doubts, and makes the reader a witness of his labors and fidelity. If Paley is better adapted to general readers, Michaelis, it appears to me, is particularly adapted to theologians.

Within a few years new adversaries have declared themselves in Germany. They have laboriously raised against the authenticity of the gospels, spiritual, learned and frivolous hypotheses, the sad products of an erudition abounding with sophisms. Notwithstanding their temporary success, they can be regarded only as the misplaced exertions of ingenious minds, more desirous of novelty and proud of their own theories, than regardful of reason and truth. As we ought to expect, new defenders have undertaken to refute these new enemies. Hug* among others, has opposed them with skilful reasoning and in a manner peculiar to himself. He has also added some direct proofs in favor of the authenticity of the gospels; but urged onward, perhaps without his knowledge, as the men with whom he had to contend, by his taste for ingenious and new things, he has handled this subject in a powerful, ingenious and interesting manner, but not so completely as could have been desired.

* Einleitung die Schriften des Neun Testament.

He is bound and limited by two striking proofs—the critical coincidences, and the testimony of the enemies of the faith.

Olshausen, who is limited to the discussion of historical proof, has left far behind all his predecessors within this narrow field. He has fully examined the subject with all the good sense, knowledge and fidelity desirable. Free from pretension and display, he has conscientously sought the truth. He has laboriously examined, what others have been contented in slightly glancing at; and without any exaggeration or evasion, has so combined the testimony and facts, as to create entirely new results, and decisive and unexpected proofs. Unhappily this remarkable work has not been translated; it is perhaps too exclusively designed for learned men ever to be so. The following section is mostly extracted from this work. I ask indulgence for the critical and historical details upon which I am about to enter; the importance and nature of the subject absolutely demand them.

SECTION SECOND.

HISTORICAL PROOFS.

Since the middle of the second century only, the primitive church has left numerous and clear documents; from this period we also find the four

gospels generally admitted. The church regarded them as authentic, having received them from the preceding generation, to which they had been transmitted by the apostles themselves, or by their immediate disciples. Before this, the Christians numbered few learned men, and their teachers were engaged in acting more than in writing. Moreover some pages only, or some lines of the few works of the early fathers have descended to us, and we cannot expect to find in them positive testimony in favor of the authenticity of the gospels. The authors of the apostolic age appeal oftener to the preachings than to the writings of the apostles; for they had heard the first, and the want of the other was hardly yet perceived. Already however, in the first half of the second century, we discover some positive homage paid to the evangelical writings. To one who knows how to examine, analyse and compare, the history of the church and of the fathers, furnish, at this period, satisfactory arguments, although often isolated and incomplete.

I will commence by pointing out some of the most striking arguments relative to each gospel separately. After which I will select others relative to the union of the gospels; and then point out some general proofs, not the only or most powerful, but those least known, and those also which extend to the remotest period.

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

We find, at the first investigation, a singular phenomenon, which seems to obscure the origin of this gospel and raise a doubt as to its authenticity. It is necessary to say a few words with regard to it.

In our collection of the New Testament, the gospel of Matthew is written like the other gospels, in Greek. The style and all the internal proofs tend not only to persuade, but to demonstrate, that this is truly the original work of Matthew, and not a translation. But the earliest testimonies of the fathers agree in affirming that this apostle wrote in Hebrew, and that in their time his book existed in that language.

We remark, in the first place, that this difficulty does not relate to the authenticity of the gospel, but to the original language of the authentic gospel. External evidence tells us that this gospel was written in Hebrew; internal, that it was written in Greek. This is the only contradiction. It does not bear upon the fundamental question. This is not the less decided by numerous and varied arguments, from which it results in the first place, that Matthew has written a gospel, then, that this gospel in whatever language it may have been written, contains precisely the same statements and facts which we find in the first of our collection.

This difficulty, when examined and placed within

proper limits, is not necessarily a contradiction. For who indeed has informed us that Matthew did not write both in Greek and Hebrew? In Hebrew, for the Hebrews of whom he was a particular apostle; and in Greek, for the church in general. Why should this be improbable? Does not this hypothesis find a sufficient motive in the circumstances and wants of the primitive church? Are we not almost driven to this supposition by the strength of opposing evidence? Or may we not rather suppose that this gospel, originally written in Greek, was immediately, and with the approbation of the apostle, translated into Hebrew by some disciple. It could thus be regarded as the original work of Matthew, and delivered as such to the churches. In either case the contradiction disappears, the difficulty is explained, and the evidences have all their force. They are indeed strengthened by this difficulty, for we now find that the authenticity of this gospel rests upon two different copies, both positive, ancient, and ascending to the same source.

From the first origin of the church, a sect of Hebrew Christians existed at Jerusalem, called *Nazarenes*, who, wishing to preserve the law, adopted into it the whole gospel. Separated from the church by their faith, their language, and yet more by their origin, their national prejudices and their habits, they remained always isolated and but little known. They suffered doubly from Roman tyranny, as Chris-

tians and as Jews, and finished their course by dividing into small sects, which shortly afterwards disappeared; history never having deigned to inform us when and how they became extinct.

History however has furnished us several important results upon the subject.

These sectaries, who were established in Palestine, declared themselves and were believed to be, the depositaries of the gospel of Matthew. We find that this is in accordance with a tradition preserved by Eusebius, which was generally admitted in his time, and confirmed by the internal evidence of the first gospel. According to this history, Matthew, the first teacher of the Hebrew Christians of Palestine, had written for his disciples. The Nazarenes possessed and read this gospel in Hebrew. Whatever was the origin of this Hebrew form, it assumed it necessarily among those who were not well acquainted with Greek, but spoke Hebrew constantly, and retained their national language through patriotism and pride. Being Jews rather than Christians, they wished no other gospel than that, because Matthew alone had been the particular apostle of their country. When these sects, isolated from the universal church, were destroyed under the persecution, their Hebrew gospel could not survive them. Written in an unknown idiom, and disfigured by numerous interpolations, it perished with its guardians. .2. The gospel was altered

in the hands of the Ebionites or Nazarenes, who being an ignorant and small sect and moreover hardly Christian, were not the right persons to watch over its integrity. The Nazarenes also enlarged by degrees this gospel by inserting in the history of Jesus Christ many words and facts preserved only by a doubtful tradition. But (an important circumstance for the proof which this altered gospel is able to furnish us) they added and did not retrench. It is necessary to except, however, the suppression of the first two chapters, which were admitted by a part of their number only.

The apocryphal gospel celebrated in the first church under the name of the gospel of the Hebrews, is no other than the disfigured work of Matthew.

3. These alterations were introduced slowly. The higher we ascend in the history of this Hebrew gospel, the fewer we find. As we descend they become more and more frequent. At first, this gospel was identical with the Matthew which we possess. We perceive at once all the strength which this fact adds, or rather restores, to the testimony of these Nazarenes.

We conclude from these facts that we have, in favor of the gospel of Matthew, the testimony of a church composed of the immediate disciples of this apostle. Proud of this gospel, the only one written

in their idiom and by their apostle, the Nazarenes adopted this alone.

We remark, moreover, in passing, that this testimony explains the origin and nature of the gospel of the Hebrews.

Whilst the Jewish Christians are furnishing this ancient and singular testimony, the universal church of the second century does not render a less positive, in favor of the Greek text of the same evangelist.

We have, then, in favor of the gospel of Matthew a second witness, the Catholic or general church, an ancient and clear evidence, and so much the more worthy of credit, as it agrees with that of an opposing and despised sect. If the Catholic church had not been certain of the authenticity of the gospel of Matthew, it is not with the Nazarenes that they would have sought it. I repeat; we have in favor of this gospel two isolated and concordant testimonials, derived from two different traditions and two hostile churches. A state of things which cannot be explained only by a common source, by a gospel really authentic and truly the work of Matthew.*

* The Nazarenes and Ebionites were different sects of that class of Christians termed Jewish Christians. They have been by many confounded together. This is probably owing to the circumstance of their possessing in common the gospel of St. Matthew written in Hebrew, as well as from their having given a preference to this gospel above the others. This is a fact to which the ancient authorities unanimously give their testimony.

GOSPEL OF MARK.

This gospel, being less complete and original than the others, has, owing to this circumstance left fewer traces in the monuments of the ancient church. Of all the gospels, this alone, was not exclusively preferred by any particular sect, and did not represent any religious tendency. It is probably owing to this, that it has not been subject to any considerable alterations, nor frequent or very ancient quotations. We find however, a remarkable testimony which is rendered for it by an immediate disciple of Jesus Christ.

Papias, a disciple of St. John and bishop of Hierapolis, knew in Asia two disciples of the Saviour, Aristeon and John the presbyter. He obtained from them the most exact relations concerning the Saviour and his apostles, and deposited them in a book, some fragments of which Eusebius has preserved. One of these relates to St. Mark which I will translate literally. "Behold" says Papias, "what the presbyter said;" Mark having become

It was undoubtedly the common belief of all Christians. But this concurrence of opinion between the Nazarenes and Ebionites with regard to the gospel of St. Matthew, should not lead us to the belief that they were the same sect. In some respects their opinions were similar, but in others, widely different. The most marked distinction is found in their views of the connection between the old and new dispensation. The Ebionites wished to maintain the Jewish law in all its rigor. The Nazarenes, while they wished to have the law observed, did not esteem it to be essential, that all who were converted to christianity should be bound by its forms. They were also distinguished by other differences of a simular nature.

the interpreter of Peter, placed carefully in writing all that he remembered; he did not however place in order the discourses and actions of Jesus Christ, for he had not been the disciple of the Lord; he had only followed Peter who gave his instructions according to circumstances, and without forming under a regular arrangement, the discourses of the Lord. We cannot, therefore, reproach Mark with any thing peculiar in this gospel, for Peter dictated it. Mark's only solicitude was not to omit or alter any thing which he had learned." *

Some one may perhaps answer that this relation has descended to us, through the hearsay of a man of little judgment; and that his work contains many vague and probably incorrect statements. Without wishing to deny or discuss these assertions, I believe however with Olshausen that we can attain from hence the following conclusions;

1. We have an exact and very ancient testimony in favor of the gospel of Mark.

2. This testimony does not rest upon a vague tradition, but upon the assertion of a known person, designated by name, presented as a guarantee of its truth, and as far as we are able to judge, an impartial witness.

3. If we call in question the relation of John the presbyter, this testimony nevertheless proves

* Papias flourished about the year 116. He is the first writer by whom any of the gospels are mentioned. In the fragment preserved by Eusebius in his Ecclesiastical History he terms them oracles.

that at the time of Papias, the gospel of Mark was generally known; or in other words, that in the first third of the second century there was no doubt with regard to its authenticity.

GOSPEL OF LUKE.

As the gospel of Matthew, so the gospel of Luke presents in favor of its authenticity, the exclusive preference of an heretical sect and the general support of the true church. Only as the Marcionites did not exist at the time of the apostles, their testimony has much less of force than that of the Nazarenes. It proves only the conviction of their chief, a presumptuous and learned man, and the universal belief of his cotemporaries.

The sect of the Marcionites was entirely opposed to that of the Jewish Christians. Marcion not only refused to receive the law, but also the Jewish revelation. He attacked the whole old Testament, and excluded from the New, all which he could not bend to his own doctrine. As Matthew had been the apostle of the Hebrews, as his gospel insists moreover upon works of obedience, and as he was for this double reason preferred by those portions of the church, which gave to christianity a Jewish and legal complexion, so Paul who had been the apostle of the calling of the Gentiles and of justification by faith, was held in greater veneration by those christians who exalted the opposite tendency.

Marcion also maintained that all the apostles excepting Paul, had altered the doctrine of their Master, and that he had, therefore, adopted for his sect the gospel of Luke, the disciple of Paul. This gospel, addressed to a Roman, written as is generally believed, under the eye of Paul, and in the bosom of that celebrated church of Rome which had been so strongly prejudiced by the epistles and preaching of Paul, against the doctrine of Jewish justification, was that indeed which Marcion would necessarily prefer. If he rejected the others, he did not however deny their authenticity, and this is, consequently, a striking testimony which he has rendered in their favor. He rejected them only as opposed to the true doctrines, that is to say, to his own. He pushed still farther this singular pretension to decide absolutely in a matter of faith. Without attacking the authenticity or purity of the only gospel which he deigned to admit, he permitted himself daringly to suppress whatever was not agreeable to him. He erased nearly all the passages which contradicted his new dogmas; he permitted some to remain which he could turn to his own purpose, and thus interpreted those which he dared not retrench. Then, reuniting this gospel thus modified to the ten Epistles of St. Paul, he formed a New Testament at will, and gave it to his disciples, as the only Bible whose precepts ought to regulate their belief.

We shall show in another article the real testimony which Marcion rendered to the canonical book. The question now is with regard to St. Luke, and it is very evident from what precedes that Marcion regarded his history of the Saviour, as authentic. The audacity with which he suppressed some words is another affair, and does not in the least weaken the testimony of which I speak. It is the historical opinion of Marcion and the general opinion of his time now under consideration. This testimony ascends at least to the year 140, for already before this epoch, Marcion, the son of a bishop of Sinope, had arrived at Rome, excommunicated by his father, and ten years after, his sect had expanded and his pretended New Testament was adopted by his followers.

Whilst Marcion renders, in this manner, testimony in favor of the gospel of Luke, the universal church receives it also, but treats it with more respect. We will prove this when speaking of the evangelical books. We will now content ourselves in affirming that the most ancient documents of the history of the church, the quotations of Iræneus in the second half of the second century, as well as those of Justin in the first, show us the gospel of Luke admitted without dispute in all the known churches.

This testimony, joined with that of the Marcionites, appears to me to have all the power desirable.

GOSPEL OF JOHN.

It would be easy to form a volume from the considerations and historical proofs, upon which the authenticity of this gospel rests. I limit myself to one only.

John, the teacher of Ephesus, composed and sent forth this gospel from that place, and also died there at the end of the first century. All this is at least highly probable. A long career, filled by the high functions of the apostleship, full of virtue and zeal, surrounded by honor and celebrity, had multiplied in Asia Minor the disciples of the holy apostle. Fifty years had passed away after his death. Those who had formerly received his instructions, proud of that privilege, did not neglect occasions for calling them to memory. Now, is it probable, is it even possible, that under such circumstances, the remembrance of the apostle being yet alive in his church, a supposititious gospel under his name would have been received into the midst of those who had personally known him. Would any circumstances have caused to be received at Ephesus, as written by John and for the Ephesians, as published amongst them by himself, a history, which John had not in reality written, and which the Ephesians had never in reality received. By what prodigy could this apocryphal gospel have found itself received, known and acknowledged by the immediate disciples of the supposed writer?

Such indeed was the state of affairs fifty years after the death of the son of Zebedee. This is proved by the history of the second and third centuries. I cannot give here, all the developments of this proof; I limit myself to some particular details. And I do not affirm any thing in this article which has not been proved and sufficiently revealed by Olshausen.

Polycarp bishop of Smyrna, and Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, had both been disciples of John, both lived and taught in the first part of the second century, in that same Asia Minor where John had lived and taught. They both were acquainted with the gospel of John, were surrounded by those who knew and acknowledged its claims, and they never expressed any doubts as to its authenticity. We possess, it is true, a few lines only of the writings of these fathers, and in those lines there is no question raised with regard to the gospel of John; this want is sufficiently supplied from other indications. Thus, for example, Polycarp quotes the first epistle of this apostle, and according to Eusebius, Papias has likewise quoted it. Now we have a right to affirm that no one could have received the epistle without also receiving the gospel. Too many critical and historical arguments bind these two writings together, to permit them ever to be separated. Even at present the authenticity of one and the other is, by common consent, constantly defend-

ed or denied. No one believes it possible to separate them. Moreover, Eusebius who knew and had carefully studied the writings of Polycarp and Papias, as he had those of all the fathers, constantly affirms that all admitted the authenticity of this gospel, and that it had never been contested.

Irenæus, bishop of Lyons, was a disciple of Polycarp; he preserved a remembrance full of veneration for his master; he loved to recall his precepts and his virtues. Now, this same Irenæus enters with considerable detail into the question of the authenticity of the gospels, he defends them with zeal, and says that he had never heard it asserted that any doubt had ever been raised against that of John in any of the churches, scattered over the surface of the extensive Roman empire. And yet Irenæus was contending with the Gnostics, while they were making use of this very gospel, endeavoring by misusing it, to defend their errors. It is to the Gnostics that in our day this gospel has been attributed. If Irenæus had had any doubts upon the authenticity, or divinity of this work, would he have permitted such easy means of confuting his enemies, to have escaped him. Polycarp himself was their adversary, and has added by his silence, a powerful testimony. Would he have silently consented that these detested heretics should defend themselves in the name of his master, attributing to him an apocryphal work in order to trace to such a source their errors.

We could perhaps draw a new proof from the testimony of another sect which arose in Asia, at the death of Polycarp. I refer to the Montanistes, who likewise endeavored to support their errors by the gospel of John. But not being able to dwell upon all, I pass to a very different sect, which, on the contrary, rejected all the writings of the apostle of Ephesus. It may seem that the testimony of this singular sect may be an objection to our thesis; nevertheless, the nature and motives of these attacks furnish us in reality an irresistible argument. It discovers indeed the subtleness and partiality of those weak adversaries, who alone in those early days, believed it possible to reject the gospel of John.

The Aloges formed a sect but little known — they were without power, and of short duration. It appears that Eusebius and Irenæus had never heard them mentioned. Enemies of the Montanistes, they rejected the gospel of John entirely through dogmatical motives, in order to triumph over those sectaries. That which the love of truth and respect for the memory and mission of the apostle, had prohibited to Irenæus and Polycarp, the Aloges more passionate and less instructed were driven to do. Urged onward by the same spirit of dispute, they denied even all the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and as they excluded from their faith, a belief in the divine protection promised by

Jesus, they excluded it from the book of the law, where it was more specially announced. Acting from such motives, these sectarians, for this alone, merit little attention. Even then, in denying the fourth gospel, could they have defended themselves by historical argument and plausible objections, their reasons would have been always suspected. But they were not able to make any attack worthy of the least credit. All that we are able to gather proves that they drew no objection from history, and did not support themselves by any previous doubts; they sought only critical difficulties, and the most miserable which can be imagined. These were chiefly the differences between St. John and the other evangelists in the order of narrated events. After having examined their objections we cannot but conclude that such adversaries are valuable to their opponents.

CANONICAL BOOKS.

Having pointed out some of the principal historical truths of the gospels separately, we will now seek those of the whole collection.

From the conclusion, and even from the middle of the second century, we find numerous positive and exact testimonies. Irenæus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian, speak of the canonical books as of a collection generally and for a long period admitted, and venerated; of the contents and au-

thenticity of which no one had, or could have any thought of doubting. We find by their writings that from Africa to Gaul, from Rome to Syria, from Asia Minor to Egypt, that every where, in a word where christianity had spread her churches, this collection was the only one received, which causes it to be retraced to the origin of the diffusion of the faith, that is to say to the origin of christianity. Besides, by another hypothesis, it would be necessary that one gospel had been declared preferable to others, after a public and positive decision, and by an authority sufficiently powerful to make this choice universal and marked. Now we cannot find any trace of this decision and authority; we do not know to what period and what place it can be assigned. We are powerfully led to the idea that this collection is as ancient as the apostles; that these writings, by the fact alone of their known origin, were placed apart from all apocryphal books, from all profane writings, and compared, brought together and united by faithful persons without any agreement or effort.

The testimony of Irenæus is particularly worthy our attention. The nature of this testimony, indeed, and the character of the witness, are all we ought or can require. The writer is well informed, and his assertions are clear and particular.

Irenæus was the follower of Polycarp, the disciple of St. John, and also of the other apostles.

He had surveyed the churches of half the christian world; he was born and had been educated in Asia; he was a bishop among the Gauls, and had been on a mission to Rome.

Irenæus * declares, in the strongest terms and with all the desirable minuteness, that there are four authentic gospels, the works of the apostles and

* Irenæus was one of the earliest writers upon christianity with whose works we are acquainted. He was born in the first haf of the second century, and suffered martyrdom about the year 202. In his treatise against Heretics, a work in five books, we find the following interesting and important remarks referred to above. The quotation is taken from Profesor Norton's "Evidences of the Genuineness of the Gospels."

"We" says Irenæus "have not received the knowledge of the way of our salvation by any others than those, through whom the gospel has come down to us; which gospel they first preached, and afterwards by the will of God transmitted to us in writing, that it might be the foundation and pillar of our faith." "For after our Lord had risen from the dead, and they, (the apostles,) were clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit descending upon them from on high, were filled with all gifts, and possessed perfect knowledge, they went forth to the ends of the earth, spreading the glad tidings of those blessings which God has conferred upon us, and announcing peace from heaven to men; having all and every one alike, the gospel of God. Matthew then among the Hebrews, published a gospel in their own language; while Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel at Rome, and founding a church there. And after their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself delivered to us in writing what Peter had preached; and Luke, the companion of Paul, recorded the gospel preached by him. Afterwards John, the disciple of the Lord, who leaned upon his breast, likewise published a gospel, while he dwelt at Ephesus in Asia. And all these have taught us that there is one God, the maker of heaven and earth, announced by the law and the prophets, and one Christ, the son of God, and he who does not assent to them, despises also Christ himself, the Lord, and he despises likewise the Father and is self-condemned, resisting and opposing his own salvation; and this all heretics do."

The various passages quoted from the gospels by Irenæus, may be found in Lardner's works. They occupy eleven closely printed folio columns.

their companions. He undertakes to prove even that there could not have been any more or less. He names these four gospels and relates particularly how and by whom each one was written.* He makes by the union of the four one unique and divine whole,† to which he gives the generic name, "The gospel."

"The relative authenticity of the gospels is so great," he says, "that heretics themselves render their testimony, and endeavor to make them assist to support their errors." Having then mentioned that the Ebionites defended themselves by Matthew, the Corinthans by Mark, Marcion by Luke, and Valentine by John, he concludes as we have done, that our faith in the authenticity of these four books ought to be immovable since we have as evidence, our enemies.‡

Before the time of Irenæus, even before the middle of the second century, we are able to discover decisive tokens of the existence of the collection. I will mention two.

1. The writings of Justin Martyr furnish us the first. This converted philosopher flourished before the middle of the second century; he is quoted by Irenæus as an author already ancient. He had become acquainted, through his own observation, with the ecclesiastical customs of a great

* Cont. Heres Lib. iii. c. i.
† Cont. Heres Lib. iii. c. ii. s. 8.
‡ Ib. Lib. i. c. viii. s. i.

part of the empire. He was born in Palestine, and had been at Alexandria, wrote at Rome and Ephesus, and had travelled through Italy. He knew then the three principal churches of this period, Rome, Alexandria and Ephesus. He appears to have had personal communications with the principal learned men of his time, as Polycarp, Marcion, and Ancinet, bishop of Rome. He ought, consequently, to be better informed than any one, of the existing opinions upon the gospel and canon. It will be interesting therefore, to examine his testimony under this point of view. It is true that we have preserved a small part of his writings; but the expressions of Eusebius, who was acquainted with his work, will be able of themselves alone to supply the deficiency. They prove indeed, that the writings of Justin had for their basis, the sacred book which we acknowledge and reverence. Moreover, the fragments which remain to us of these writings, afford very clear and positive testimony. Justin speaks often of the "Memoir by the Apostles," as of books which contain the history of Jesus. The adversaries of christianity have regarded them as entirely different books. An impartial examination would have prevented the error. According to Justin, these memoirs had many authors for he says, somewhere in speaking of them, "*Those* who have related to us the life of our Lord Jesus Christ." Among these authors there were

at least two apostles, for in another place he says, "the memoirs which have been written by *the apostles*." He associated necessarily to these at least two companions of the apostles, for he says, "written by the apostles and by their companions."* Justin also speaks of what is written in the gospel, and finally he exhibits to us himself the identity of these two expressions by saying that "the apostles in the memoirs which they have left us, and which they have named the gospel." How can any one doubt after this, that he knew and acknowledged the canonical books? †

We are also able to arrive at the same result by another method. If we seek to discover what the "Memoirs by the Apostles" contain, by the quotations which Justin has made, we shall necessarily recognise our gospel. We shall find in this manner, about thirty fragments of our four histories of Jesus Christ, fragments composed of many verses, and well identified.

If in the passages extracted from Matthew, any one is surprised at meeting with some variations

* The singularity of this title, *Memoirs by the Apostles*, '*Απομνημονευματα των ἀποστολων*,' given to our gospels, by Justin alone, can be easily explained. Justin was a philosopher, he had been brought up in the Grecian school, and was educated by the disciples of Socrates. A remnant of pedantry caused him to designate the history of Jesus Christ, written by his apostles in four gospels, by a term similar to that which the history of Socrates bore, which had also been written in four books, by his disciple Xenophon.

† Dial. cum Tryph. p. 36, 1st ed. Thirlb.

from the commonly received version, let him recollect that Justin was a Samaritan by birth, that the Hebrew was his mother tongue, that he had, in consequence, read the gospel of Matthew, as preserved by the Nazarenes, its only depositaries, and at this period the alterations by which they afterwards disfigured their gospel, began already to be introduced.*

The second proof which we intend here to present, results from a new combination of testimony and history. This alliance is the work of Olshausen.

In an examination which we are not able to pur-

* The opinion that Justin quoted from the gospel of the Hebrews, is thought by Prof. Norton not to be tenable. He supposes, on the contrary, that Justin quoted from the gospels which we now possess, and that the variations from this text, which are found in these quotations, are to be attributed to a want of verbal accuracy; Justin having probably quoted from memory. That this was the practice of many of the fathers, and ancient writers, is evident from their writings, for we find that many of the profane, as well as the sacred writers, are often quoted with great inaccuracy. Thus we find words transposed, one word substituted for another, parts of sentences omitted, and sometimes the entire passage expressed in a different manner and form. That Justin's quotations were thus carelessly made, is very evident. In his works there are seven quotations from Plato, none of which are verbally accurate. A quotation from Xenophon is given in his own words without any regard to the original.

Prof. Norton supposes that the term "Memoirs by the Apostles," was given to the gospel of Justin, in order that the nature of the book might be understood by those to whom he was writing, namely the Emperor Antoninus Pius, and the Roman senate and people. The term "gospel" had probably been applied to the histories of Christ, but a short period. And it was so far removed from its original signification, that the name could not possibly convey any meaning, to the minds of the persons for whom his works were intended.

sue, he has shown that about the year 140 or 150, many celebrated and learned men, of different opinions and countries, had assembled at Rome. At this period our gospel was positively admitted; these learned men, moreover, not only did not protest against its authenticity, but, on the contrary, agreed to recognise it, although sectarian interest and opinion might have led them to have taken a different course. This agreement of men who, upon every other point, were in opposition, proves the universal, ancient and clear conviction of the different churches to which they belonged, and of which some of their number were the leaders. There were, in the first place, Ancinet, bishop of Rome; Polycarp of Smyrna, the disciple, as we have said, of John and the other apostles; Justin, of whom we have just spoken, who belonged to the church of Palestine, and had visited that of Alexandria; we find also two heretics equally celebrated, but of very different opinions; Marcion of Sinope, a city of Pontus, and Valentine of Alexandria. These five persons were born before the death of St. John, and if the gospel had not been deemed authentic in the different churches of which they were the followers, it is not upon the evidence of the church of Rome alone, that four of their number, the disciple and leaders of the eastern church, would have suddenly admitted it. The history of the primitive church proves that this was not the case. "If the evan-

gelical gospel," says Olshausen upon this occasion, "had been the work or the property of one church, or of a party, it is impossible that the others would have agreed in its admission. Would the Marcionites as the true Christians, for example, have acknowledged the books of the Valentinians, the books upon which they founded their doctrines? Would the Alexandrians, the Syrians and the Asiatics have accepted the gospels of Rome, without assuring themselves beforehand of their authenticity? Would this collection have been easily introduced into Asia, if the disciples of John had not been certain, if the churches of that province had not been well assured, that the gospel placed in that collection, under the name of John, was in reality his work? Would Rome have admitted the canon, if her christians had learned from their fathers that Luke had not written the gospel, or had written a different one from that introduced? If the faithful of Syria, of Palestine, of Alexandria, had heard the same said with regard to Matthew, would they have easily been persuaded to adopt this pretended collection in which another book had been invested with that venerable name?

I stop and limit myself to the repetition of that which I have before declared, that the preceding remarks by no means comprehend or even indicate, all the historical proofs of the existence and universal admission of the gospel during the second

century. I have not spoken of Celsus, Ptolemy, Tatian, Heracleus, Basilides, Isidore, and many others. I believe however, that sufficient has been said to convince every impartial and enlightened person. I have confined myself in this chapter, to historical researches alone; nevertheless, I believe myself already right in affirming that the authenticity of the gospels is proved.

SECTION THIRD.

CRITICAL PROOFS.

I PLACE under three heads, the critical proofs which are now to be unfolded. *Positive* proof, or coincidences, which directly confirm the authenticity of the gospels.* *Negative* proof drawn from the absence of anachronisms and errors. *Indirect* proof, resulting from the feebleness of objections. As to the proof of sentiment, drawn from the candor of the writers and the naturalness of their relations, I defer this to the following section, where it more properly belongs.

Positive Proof.

We must not expect here a regular demonstra-

*In this section I have united the Acts to the gospels. It is indeed the work of an evangelist; the sequel or second part of a gospel. The authenticity of all these books, the subjects of the same reasoning, should be proved after the same manner.

tion. The critical coincidences to which this article is consecrated, consist in a minute and particular resemblance between the book under consideration, and the cotemporaneous manners, the facts related by history, and the style of the other writings, by the same author. Resemblances of this kind, do not form, by themselves alone, a rigorous proof, but they are tokens of truth, which satisfy the mind and remove suspicion. And they are so much the more worthy of attention, as the coincidences are less striking, for then it becomes much more improbable than they should have been designed.

When, in opening an apocryphal book, say the fourth of Esdras, I read in the first verse the name and genealogy of the distinguished person to whom it is attributed; this proves absolutely nothing for the authenticity of the book, for it is to be supposed, that the first object of an imposter will be to persuade the reader of the truth of his narrative by such means. But when, near the commencement of St. Matthew,* I behold Joseph fearing to go to Judea, because Archelaus reigned there, without the sacred historian explaining to us even the cause for that fear, when I learn afterward, by profane history, that this prince rendered himself hateful to his subjects, by his barbarity, I am necessarily struck by this resemblance, which has not the appearance of having been prepared, and I feel

* Matt. ii. 22.

disposed to give my confidence to the historian. This confidence will be stronger yet, if the coincidence is less evident, and demands more labor to be discovered. For the less likelihood there is that it will be observed, makes it the more improbable, that an imposter would have placed it by design in this book.

The seventh chapter of St. Luke, for example, speaks to us of a miracle performed by Jesus Christ in the small village of Nain, but it does not tell us where it was situated. Profane authors inform us that it was upon the road from Capernaum to Samaria, about midway between these two cities. Josephus informs us, moreover, that the Galileans in going to Jerusalem by Samaria, pass through Nain. If now we seek in the narrative of St. Luke, all that can be found in agreement, or otherwise, with this information, we discover by the first verse that Jesus Christ came probably from Capernaum; and by the seventeenth verse, that he was approaching Judea; an agreement truly remarkable, and yet difficult to be perceived. If there is any thing evident in this chapter, it is that the evangelist had not the slightest intention of tracing the journey of Jesus Christ, and it is, in a manner, notwithstanding him, that we have discovered the principal points.

Without doubt, such coincidences are not complete proof. Each critical argument taken by itself,

adds only a degree of probability to the authenticity of the book; it does not assure us of its certainty. But if these marks of sincerity are multiplied and combined, and materially enlighten and strengthen each other, it is otherwise. Then, indeed, it becomes absurd to explain all, by the art of imposture or by accident. The number of these coincidences can become so great and their agreement so remarkable as to render this proof the most persuasive of all. It is thus, that in the opinion of an enlightened tribunal, the incidents which often throw an unexpected insight upon a crime, weigh even stronger than the testimony, because these elments of conviction are less accessible to imposture. It is, also, slight proofs which make generally more impression upon learned and judicious men than critical proofs. Now what book had ever to so great an extent, this kind of proof in its favor.

Lardner, Paley, Michaelis and Hug have unfolded this class of argument and collected a large number of the coincidences. But the subject is not exhausted; we can easily collect many others. I cite a very small number in order to make the nature and efficacy of this kind of demonstration better understood.

I commence by borrowing from Paley two or three relative to the passion of Jesus Christ.

According to the gospels, the high priest who presided at the condemnation of Jesus Christ, was

named Caiaphas ; at the same period Pilate was the Roman governor. This is confirmed by Josephus. He mentions the elevation to the high priesthood of a certain Joseph, *called also Caiaphas*,* and immediately afterwards adds that Pilate became governor. He apprises us afterwards of the removal of Pilate, and shortly after, of the removal of Caiaphas. According to Josephus then, Caiaphas was high priest before the arrival of Pilate and remained in office until after his banishment.

Two different persons Annas and Caiaphas bear at the same time the title of high priest. This is somewhat surprising. But Josephus gives this same title to many persons at the same time. This necessarily leads us to believe that there are some circumstances attending this office unknown to us.

Pilate caused a writing in Hebrew, Greek and Latin to be attached to the cross of the Saviour†; and we learn from passages of Suetonius and Dio Cassios that the Romans were accustomed to attach to the condemned, the cause of their punishment.

Jesus Christ was scourged before his crucifixion.‡ Three passages in Josephus and one in Livy inform us that this was a Roman custom.

Jesus carried his cross.§ Plutarch informs us that this was an accustomed refinement of cruelty.

* Jos. de Bell. 2. c. xx, sec. 3. † John xix. 19, 20. ‡ Matth. xxvii. 26. § John xix. 16.

"Then came the soldiers and *brake the legs* of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him."* Aurelius Victor relates this circumstance in the punishment of the cross, when praising Constantine for having abolished it.

Every part of the evangelical history, by reason of the allusions to ancient geography, and to the manners and laws of the Romans or Jews, furnishes similar coincidences. I pass to another kind of resemblance drawn from the comparison of the authors themselves. I borrow the following example from a dissertation of Professor Weber. †

In order to be understood, we can pursue this kind of research even to a certain degree of finesse, without falling into subtilities.

We remark that the name of Peter occurs very frequently in the fourth gospel, and that we find many new and interesting details concerning this apostle, of a nature to make us acquainted with his zeal and sincerity. ‡ It appears that the author had for this apostle a particular affection, and that he well knew and carefully collected all the traits of his zealous and loyal character, and was led by instinct, as it were, to recall them. Now, other signs, not less delicate, lead us to the belief that an intimate

* John xix. 32.

† Authentia capitis ultimi Johannis, hujusque Evangelii totius, etc. Arg. intern. usu vindicata, a Michaele Webero, etc. Halle, 1823.

‡ John i. 43. vi. 68. xiii. 6, 10, 24, 36, 37. xx, 3, 4. xxi, 7, 15—20.

connexion had indeed existed between Peter and John. Already, upon different occasions, when these two apostles with the other son of Zebedee had enjoyed the privilege of accompanying Jesus alone, it was manifested that they were becoming, mutually, better acquainted with each other. Moreover Jesus Christ had sent his apostles, *two by two*,* and afterwards in like manner the seventy disciples.†

He probably wished to find for each a counsellor and brother, whose enlightened advice and tender friendship would assist him, in better fulfilling his task. It is probable that Peter and John were thus associated; they went together to prepare the Passover for their master‡; they followed him in company to Caiaphas§; they ran together to his sepulchre‖; they went together to the temple to heal the lame man¶; they appeared together before the Sanhedrim and braved its power**; both were sent by the apostles to Samaria††; upon the sea of Tiberias it was John who informed Peter of the approach of the Lord‡‡; and when Jesus Christ announced to Peter a cruel death, he, instead of being absorbed by this terrible event, hastily demanded, speaking of John, "Lord and what shall this man do."§§ All this proves at least that there was between the apostles an intimate connection and

* Mark vi. 7. † Luke x. 1. ‡ Luke xxii. 8. § John xviii. 15. ‖ John xx. 2, 9. ¶ Acts iii. 1, 11. ** Acts iv. †† Acts viii. 14. ‡‡ John xxi. 7. §§ John xxi. 21.

much sympathy. Does not this fact agree with our remark upon the last gospel? Does it not make manifest a real harmony between the different portions of the evangelical history? Does it not indicate that the more fully we examine a gospel, the more we discover the marks of good faith? Does it not exhibit, with a new probability, the apostle John as the author of the fourth biography of Jesus?

These marks are certainly not without force, and yet they are not sufficiently striking to have been inserted by design and by an imposter, in the evangelical history; but it is for this very reason, that they excite interest, and are able to become the elements of a powerful demonstration.

Negative Proof.

When, after a careful and minute examination, a writing presents no anachronism or error in the narration of contemporaneous events; when learning and criticism are not able to discover the marks of a later period, its authenticity is certain, at least if it be an historical work. Criticism has too many resources, for a supposititious book to be able to withstand the successive investigations of learned men, who compare it, by turns, with the books of the same period, with the most ancient monuments, and more recent facts; who examine it as regards the time, the manners, the place, and the language, and coming one after the other, always re-com-

mence the examination with new ardor, sagacity and learning. We are able to affirm, and experience proves its truth, that no historical imposture has entirely succeeded. The most skilful have finally been detected.*

I cannot give here the catalogue of all the examples which I might cite. I prefer to place a single one before my readers. It is so much the more striking, as the book which is the subject of it, is represented as prophetical, not historical, and might therefore confound the time without exciting suspicion.

The apocryphal book which in our Bible bears the name of the fourth of Esdras,† is excluded from the canonical book by the Roman, Greek and our own churches. Having fallen for a long time into obscurity, it has but little attracted the attention of learned men, and the best way of becoming acquainted with its history will be to make a critical examination for ourselves.

In the first verse, the author is called *Esdras the Prophet*, a title in appearance very natural to be

* The ancient poets and historians, however learned they may have been, almost always permit some similar errors to escape their notice, when they speak of a time anterior to their own. Thus in the 366th verse of the 6th Book of the Ænied, the shade of Palinurus says to Æneas "Portus require Velinos" "*Seek the harbor of Velia.*" It is well known, however, that the city of Velia was a seaport on the shore of Lucania, between the promontories of Palinurus and Posidium, and was founded by Servius Tullus more than six hundred years after Æneas.

† In the English Bible the 2d book of Edras in the apocrypha.

applied to inspired men writing the prophecies. This title however causes us to doubt. We perceive, indeed, in the authentic writings of Esdras, that he never took this title, and that it was never bestowed upon him. He was termed the priest and ready scribe, but never prophet. In the remainder of the first chapter, if we except the last verse, nothing confirms very positively this first doubt; all the words might have proceeded from the mouth of Esdras. Yet in place of the powerful and direct lessons which we ought to expect from a prophet, we here remark a singular affectation to imitate other writers and to recall to memory, occasionally and without any design the miraculous history of the first Israelites. Now if we find that most of the supposed apocryphal books, under the name of sacred writings, furnish the same kind of filling up (*remplissage*) our suspicions are necessarily increased. Moreover, in verses 39 and 40, the author enumerates twelve minor prophets. But Malachi, with whom he terminates, did not commence his ministry until a quarter of a century after the death of Esdras. From this, we are certain, that Esdras could not have written this book, and that the title conceals a fraud. We would observe that this, although a decided, is not a palpable fraud. Even an ingenious imposter might have very easily suffered himself to be detected if he had not possessed a thorough knowledge of Hebrew chronology.

Esdras and Malachi had both exercised their ministry, upon their return from the captivity; some centuries afterwards their distinct ages might have been very easily confounded, and the general opinion, which made Esdras the arranger of the canonical books of the old Testament, tended to the belief that he was the last writer.

The second chapter gives us more positive light. We immediately behold it full of facts borrowed from the prophets. One feature of the thirtyfirst verse confirms us in the conviction that the work cannot be authentic. Esdras speaks there of a revelation which he had received upon Mount Horeb. It would seem very easy to an author possessing little knowledge, and ignorant of oriental geography, to cause Esdras to be initiated into his mission, in the same place where Moses had received his own. But Esdras could not have coasted along the shore of the Red Sea, in going from Assyria to Palestine; and his history shows us, that neither before nor after this epoch, he had any better opportunity of visiting that sea and Mount Horeb.

From this verse, to the end of the chapter, the imposture betrays itself more openly. The author wishes to predict Jesus Christ, and he does it with too much clearness not to be suspected. He speaks in express terms of the Saviour, of the kingdom of heaven, of the elect clothed with white garments; he goes so far even, as to exhibit to us the Son of

God, distributing palms and crowns to the martyrs. It is not thus that the prophets announced the event; with them it is always somewhat obscured. From this we feel assured that the author was posterior to Jesus Christ, and was himself a Christian.

If we study, in the same manner, the remainder of the book, we easily discover that this author wrote in a time of persecution, in order to encourage the faithful, after the twelve Cæsars and the first division of the empire, probably some time after the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

This is what a rapid and superficial examination has caused us to perceive, at the commencement of the apocryphal book. Can it be possible, that a thorough, learned, and minute examination, a hundred times retaken by critics of all opinions, and all ages, could not have unveiled something analogous in the gospels, if they are not authentic? The place and the times of which these books give us the history, augment the improbability of this supposition. There is not perhaps in all ancient times, an era and a country to which it would be more difficult to accommodate exactly, a history invented at a later date. Indeed, there is no period, probably, in which successive conquests and revolutions produced so rapid and varied changes, in manners, laws, government and language. I will give one example only, drawn from the family of the Herods.

That dynasty was composed of seven princes, comprising not only regular descendants, but also brothers and nephews. They were all comprised within four generations only, and were admitted to power during the short space of one century, or a little more. How easy it would be to confound them. Four of their number bore the same name, that of Herod, and two that of Agrippa, which makes it still more easy for errors to be committed. They did not succeed in a regular order, but they governed sometimes two at a time, sometimes three, sometimes one. Some had the title of king, others that of tetrach, others had successively both. Their empire changed as continually as their title, and, as it is important to observe, without conquest, without eclat, but according to the will of the emperor, according to some decree, which did not leave, as a victory would have done, deep traces in the memory of men and in their books. These changes took place not only at the accession of a new king, but during the lives of the same rulers. By turns these princes ruled over the whole of Judea, a single province, a single city or even a temple. Sometimes they were deprived of all command, and had only an honorary title without power, or were banished or imprisoned. One generation lost the empire which another had acquired; the succeeding regained it, after an interregnum, with new combinations, a new capital, and change of provinces.

Indeed, to embarrass yet more this singular dynasty, with these seven princes we find three princesses of the same family, who married either with their own relations or foreigners, and who occupy a place among the events of this period. What a labyrinth. How could an author not contemporary have succeeded in delivering himself from it? If criticism has succeeded in emerging from this labyrinth, it is by the aid of long researches, by studying and comparing with great care, the profane authors who have spoken of this period; it is with the assistance of this methodical, patient and ingenious science, which is peculiar to modern times only. But, certainly, no one will readily believe, that an imposter, a writer of false gospels in the second century, could have succeeded in bringing, frequently into view these various princes, without being deceived as to the title, power, person or period. Now we find, that in five passages of the gospels or the Acts, mention is made of some one of the members of this dynasty. No one is mentioned twice, and only one is omitted. Yet these five passages do not present the least error, which might almost be considered miraculous, if our books were not contemporaneous. I deliver with confidence, this result to those accustomed to historical studies, and capable of appreciating this kind of proof.

Indirect Proof.

If there is one fact universally acknowledged, by all those accustomed to the study of ancient books, it is, that in no instance can every circumstance be clearly explained. The presence of some obscurities, and, on account of these, the possibility of some objections even, cannot then be a sufficient argument against their authenticity.

The nature and number of such objections, nevertheless, ought to have great weight in the discussion. If they are numerous, if they bear upon essential points, if the errors, moreover, which they pretend to discover, are of a nature to prove not the ignorance but the fraud of the authors, if, in fine, the learned and successive researches to which they give rise confirm instead of weakening them, it is impossible, but that they should greatly shake our confidence. But if they bear upon small and trifling facts; if the objections, when admitted, create new difficulties, greater than the original; if they are small in number and are to be explained better by the error of writers than imposture; if, in fine, they badly sustain the discussion, are unable to form the base of any hypothesis and always create greater obscurities; then, far from furnishing a motive for questioning the discussed authenticity, they form, in reality, a very strong although indirect argument in its favor.

It is this argument, to which we now appeal, in

testimony of the authenticity of the gospels. We apprehend that we can only point it out; it is here especially, that the development would demand details without end.

The authenticity of the gospels has been exposed to two classes of critical attacks entirely distinct; the objections of the incredulous, and the hypotheses of the learned. Both furnish in reality, the argument of which I speak.

1. The incredulous have brought against the gospels positive objections, founded upon those errors which they have believed to have discovered. There remain three of these objections perhaps, which can be explained in a manner very probable, but to which we cannot give decisive answers. All three relate to the chronology only of the gospels, or rather to that of St. Luke alone. When we grant to all these, the importance which is sought for them, and which they are far from possessing, there results against this evangelist, and against this evangelist only, who wrote, as is well known, more than thirty years after Jesus Christ, a suspicion of ignorance of dates and confusion with regard to time, but nothing of fraud and error. The other gospels are not affected by this circumstance, and the authenticity of that of St. Luke cannot be farther shaken. I ask now all who are practised in criticism if such poor objections do not afford a sure triumph for that authenticity, against which they have been raised.

2. Within thirty years, German and English critics have published a great number of successive hypotheses, upon the origin of the gospels. They have attacked their authenticity, not only in general, by positive objections, but by ingenious suppositions presented with much knowledge and genius. They have displayed a talent, sometimes very remarkable, in inventing new explanations of the existence of these books, in adorning their scientific reveries with plausible livery, and in disguising the feeble sides of the frail edifices which their self-love had constructed. By reason of the novelty of these ideas, and a talent often very distinguished, they have attracted the attention of learned men, and in some countries or rather in some universities, voices of admiration have been heard. Let not Christians be disheartened. These holy histories, the objects of our veneration, and which speak so powerfully to the hearts of those who know how to read them, have not been more moved by these singular theologians than by the weak efforts of the preceding century.

It will be well, at the commencement to make some general remarks upon these new aggressions.

1. Notwithstanding their zeal for their hypotheses, notwithstanding the great learning they have acquired from the history and criticisms of the gospel, the learned men of whom I spake, have not been able to find any direct objection against

their authenticity worthy of consideration. I repeat, they have, by no means, succeeded in rendering that authenticity improbable — hardly indeed can they be said to have labored to this end. They appear to have aspired only to render their new and strange hypotheses piquant and probable.

2. Moreover, had these hypotheses been true, our gospels undoubtedly would not have been all authentic; but they would have yet been ancient; they would have been, in a great measure, composed from the writings or the lessons of the authors whose names they bear; our inventors of hypotheses were too learned to dare to proceed further; in general, also, they did not write in a spirit of hostility. Many of their number did not expect by their labors to destroy the authority of the books they attacked. And all, in declaring them not authentic, did not accuse them of imposture: sometimes they even truly recognized and venerated their divine origin, without endeavoring to gainsay it.

3. The authors of these systems have refused to support them by historical testimony, and, indeed, it would have been entirely against them. This concession alone is a defeat.

4. Many among them seem to consider their hypotheses as theories without any application, so much do they forget them in practice. After having in their prefaces (prologomenes) contested the

authenticity of the gospels, in the commentary which follows, they do not, in the least, call in question that authenticity but seem often to believe it certain.

Let us leave now these general considerations and trace a rapid sketch of this extraordinary learned crisis, which the union of knowledge to error, of criticism to sophism, and the contrast of the seriousness of the subject with the levity of its management, have rendered so interesting and sad to the observer.

It has not been marked by a progress of clearness, of certainty, or of probability even, in the succession and discussion of the proposed hypotheses. That result has not been obtained, which we always expect when old errors yield to increasing intelligence, and fall under the attacks of true knowledge. We have not seen conjectures made clear, corrected, formed by degrees into those more probable and permanent, finally take the form of regular theories or positive facts. We have not seen the ancient evidences sought after and discovered for this occasion, mutually supporting, explaining and combining themselves with critical observations to spread suddenly an unexpected light upon doubtful points. We have not seen hypotheses becoming continually more complete, — reconciling opposing facts, and finally united into one whole, more clear, more simple, more natural than any which had pre-

ceded. It is thus however that truth is discovered in criticism and history; it is by such traits that we recognize its approach.

This step has been here inverted. Instead of going from the less to the more probable, and from difference to agreement, the discussion has caused the hypotheses under consideration to pass from brightness to obscurity, from the natural to the affected, from one to many.

An ingenious system was put forth under the name of the primitive church. It acknowledged an unknown and unique gospel, which no one had even heard mentioned, and which was to be considered as the true source of our first three gospels. The celebrated author of this chimerical hypothesis succeeded, somewhat, in making this appear quite plausible; his name, among other things, had been sufficient to bring it into notice and attract the attention of a large school. It penetrated even into England, where a learned prelate republished it with some modifications. But this success challenged discussion. Then, the feeble sides of the hypothesis which had been adroitly left in the shade attracted all eyes. It was necessary to rebuild, and at each new breach its supporter endeavored to sustain its feebleness by another hypothesis engrafted upon the preceding. These successive emendations, becoming more and more forced, might have soon destroyed the little of probability

which remained. But, animated by the controversy, the learned men of the time rushed to the subject with a zeal, which seemed to be excited by passion and party spirit. Employed in building, overthrowing, and rebuilding systems, they never agreed; always commencing by overthrowing with success what others had raised, and finishing by vainly endeavoring in their turn, to construct something of their own, shaking sometimes the authority of the first three gospels together, sometimes that of each by turns, defending that which was attacked, for the purpose of immediately attacking that which was defended, disputing with the same ardor, the same feebleness, and often with the same forgetfulness of historical documents, upon the order in which our gospels had been written, and upon other accessary questions, they have furnished the learned world, a singular spectacle, sufficient to prove at least, that truth was not their aim. But in the midst of this contention, knowledge, good sense, and good faith, at last make themselves heard. From the commencement moreover, many learned men mingled in the contest, to give sensible explanations of perplexing difficulties, or plead in favor of that authenticity, established upon so many proofs and so vainly called in question. They have now nearly succeeded in terminating the strife; they have discovered, and caused to be observed, that their principal adversaries have much disfigur-

ed facts, disguised circumstances, and left in the shade much evidence. They have brought back the discussion to the point from which it commenced. Hug, in interrogating criticism, Olshausen in making history speak forth, Hemsen and others, in discussing especially the authenticity of the fourth gospel, and all in consulting good sense, which had been terribly bruised in the contest, have decided the question for all those who do not belong to any school, and have not taken any particular side. Now their works exist, their discoveries are spread abroad — light re-appears and establishes order from chaos. Soon, the attacks of these unbending theologians, will have had no other effect, than that of establishing the authenticity of the gospels upon new and solid bases, by means of the discussion which these attacks have provoked. It is to these aggressions that we at present owe a clearer conviction, new discoveries and arguments, and some excellent books in which they are contained. Have I not reason in saying that these menacing expressions, furnish us a genuine proof, of which the defenders of the gospels have a right to avail themselves ?

If we unite now the critical proof which we have just pointed out with the historical, which we presented before, we have in favor of the authenticity of the gospels a force of demonstration, which ought, I think, to satisfy every intelligent

mind. I cannot perceive how a Christian has a right in demanding more.

We have, however, as yet, said nothing of those characters of candor and good faith, or, in other words, of those proofs of sentiment which abound in our gospels. We will speak of these in the following chapter, only remarking here, that the direct proof of the truth, of the credibility, of the integrity, and of the divinity of these books, proves equally their authenticity. This is an increase of demonstration, for which we have not believed that there is any need, but which can, however, be deduced partly from the sequel of this work.

CHAPTER SECOND.

THE VERACITY OF THE EVANGELISTS.

THE gospels are authentic; the mind is convinced, but the heart is yet cold. It is necessary to feel, to be convinced that the evangelists have spoken, in the rectitude and simplicity of their soul, and that they have related what they knew and beheld. It is not testimony or logic, which will attain this end. In order that the heart may be convinced, it is necessary to read the gospels, to read them with attention, stopping at each phrase in order to consider the position, the thought, the impression of the writer, the design and aim of the Master, the relation with the people, the age, the enterprise. There will result from this such demonstration of the candor and veracity of the evangelists, such an intuition of their good faith, that certainly nothing will be better suited to attach to our holy books, all reflecting and sagacious minds. Every instructed Christian ought to do this work for himself, but we will endeavor to convince the hearts of our readers.

We will now pass from these generalities, and endeavor to render a reason for the admiration which this sermon excites.

The first distinguishing trait which attracts our notice, is its opposition to the ordinary maxims of the Jews, and its superiority over their most elevated doctrines.

Among the Hebrews, the oracles of wisdom, and even of inspired wisdom, directed the consideration of men, to the present life only; they proposed moreover to their hopes an outward and material felicity. The happy man, according to the Jews, was he, who, beloved by numerous friends, feared by his enemies, and honored by all, rejoiced in his abundance under the shade of his own vine and fig tree, and satisfied with his lot, slept at last with his fathers, leaving to his children a blessing in his memory. The wise man was he, who considered all his proceedings, became, by his experience, the oracle of the people, and the counsellor of the feeble, and united the knowledge of men to sedate and polished manners and the science of the holy law. The just, was the sincere in his words, the righteous in feeling and design, he who walked upright before God, rendered to each his due, opposed his enemies with calmness, the counsellor of the afflicted, and the orphan's father. The Jews went not beyond this. All their philosophy, as all their religion, was comprised in a lofty and upright sphere

of action, which was, without doubt, admirable for a people but just arrived at the first limit of civilization, but was temporal, visible and limited. It comprehended nothing abstract, immortal or celestial. In glancing at their doctrines and thoughts, we appear to behold fertile fields covered with abundant rural treasures, but we do not perceive the plains of heaven, the eternal mansions of the blessed, or the sublime throne of a spiritual God.

But on the hills of Galilee a voice proclaims "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Assuredly these are not the Hebrews, the fishermen and publicans of Genesareth who receive from their teacher such lessons and motives. It is necessary that a stolen ray from some unknown star should have diffused over these simple men its dazzling and pure brightness. Could they have invented these lessons? Among those, who crowded around that hill to hear the teachings of the Saviour, was there one, whose imagination could have arisen to the grandeur of those words? They astonish them without doubt, they undermine their prejudices and cause them to perceive truths little suspected; but they can understand, with difficulty only, that after death and the resurrection, the Redeemer shall found his Church and create in men new hearts and minds.

If we find nothing Jewish in these doctrines, there is likewise nothing which recalls the wisdom of Greece. Among what wise men of Greece, in what libraries, in the bosom of what academies was the publican of Capernaum instructed in the science of human salvation? No, these are not the words of a Hebrew or sage, or even of a prophet; for John the Baptist, superior to all the prophets, was yet inferior to all in the kingdom of God.* They were not the words of an apostle; for the apostles, instructed by their master, and full of his Spirit, have never equalled his language. These are not the words of a man, but of him only, who was at the same time, the *son of man* and the *Son of God.*

I remark, in the next place, that in the first words, this discourse bears the impress of two principal foundations of christian virtue; — self-denial and righteousness; new and fertile principles, to which Jesus Christ frequently directed his disciples and upon the action of which he almost entirely established his doctrines. But it is necessary to remark, that they are not here so clearly expressed and developed as they were afterwards. Jesus Christ opened the way to a renouncement of the world, and removes from earthly prosperity the power of bestowing happiness. In his placing happiness in heaven, he teaches his disciples to fix their regards upon that holier sphere while they

* Matt. xi. 11.

yet remain upon the earth. But this is an impression, which he sought to produce, rather than a doctrine which he taught. The doctrine came afterwards — he then only sought to enlarge their hearts. If he had, in the first instance, ordered these uncultivated men to take up the cross and follow him, they would have been surprised, alarmed and perhaps irritated by such language. It was necessary to commence by showing them that his cross was light, and that heaven in which they were required to place their hopes, is preferable to the earth, where they placed their treasure. There is something in this combination too particular, too closely united to the epoch of the discourse, to the views of the Saviour and the feelings of his audience, not to cause us to recognize the voice of Jesus himself. There is too much unity and wisdom for the ill-jointed work of imposture.

We observe in this discourse, in the third place, a knowledge of the human heart, and moral and social views, too deep and extended, to be attributed to any other than Jesus.

The human heart was, at first, alarmed at the strange view of happiness, to which the Redeemer wished it to be summoned — because it did not know itself, so well as it was known by Jesus. We can consult the experience of those who have taken it as a guide, and whom Providence has called to prove its value. They all agree that they have

found faith in those trials, the precious fruits of affliction, and obtained a peace and happiness they never expected. They enjoy already the rewards of a future life. "*Happy the afflicted*," they repeat atter their Master; but who would have dared utter these words had they not been first announced by Jesus.

As regards myself, when I read these lessons so full of wisdom, so superior to the weakness of our nature, and yet so well adapted to our wants; when, at each reading, I discover some new trait of knowledge concerning the human heart, the happiness of society, the destiny of man, and true virtue; when I hear the noble, popular language so full of the power of him who spoke as no man ever spake; then when I represent to myself the rural scene, the first theatre of the labors and lessons of the Saviour, the Galileans attentive and astonished at the hearing of those words, worthy to be addressed to the hearers of Socrates, and in the midst, this young carpenter of Nazareth who, at the age of thirty, perplexed the wisdom of the doctors, announced the gospel to the poor and taught the world, I desire no other proof—this is sufficient. Transported in imagination to Mount Tabor, with the son of Jonas, I contemplate, hear and worship an inhabitant of the skies, who, clothed in the human form and surrounded by angels, has come to reveal good tidings to man and bless the world.

II. We will pass to a development of another kind. We will endeavor to analyze those natural and profound marks of truth with which the evangelists have sown their narrations. We shall perceive immediately, that they paint from nature. I select for this purpose the character of the apostle Peter, that hasty, indiscreet, precipitate, but sensible and sincere man. I limit the examination to his denial and reconciliation.* We shall not even insist upon the truth of the details, in all that relates to the circumstances, (a truth which is very striking,) but shall hold to that which arises from the character.

At the first glance, the principal fact of the narration appears little probable. The most zealous of the apostles denies Jesus at once, and then, notwithstanding his faults, is appointed by his Master to a glorious and important ministry. But this seeming improbability is itself a pledge of truth, for how could the evangelists have imagined such a history? Is it in presenting the most ardent and devout of the companions of the Saviour and one of the most celebrated preachers of the gospel, as an apostate, that the envoys of Jesus would have believed that they could advance their interests? No, certainly, it is not thus an imposter would have invented, but if he had, he could not, at least, have invented those fresh and simple details, in

*Compare Matt. xxvi. Mark xiv. Luke xxii. and John xiii. xviii. xx. and xxi..

which, as we study them more and more, we gradually discover and better appreciate the faithful description of a zealous and sensible mind.

The character of Peter is composed of two principles which are always observed. A liveliness of imagination which prevents thought, and makes every thing yield to the first impression, and a tender and ardent devotedness to the Saviour. By these two elements the whole history of the apostle is unfolded.

At the approach of the last scene in his life, Jesus informed his disciples of the terrible temptations which were about to menace them, and the disgraceful misfortunes which they would bring.* Peter said "Although all should be offended yet will not I." Such was this man, prompt, confident, self-deceived. He loved his master more than every thing else in the world, and perceived in himself a power of tenderness and devotion which appeared to him boundless. He considered only the present moment, and had never known distrust or fear of the future. Jesus Christ informed him that he was mistaken, and gave him a particular detail of the fault he would that very night commit. But in vain, the words even of him who knew all things did not terrify him. Something told him that he loved Jesus too well to abandon him; he believed it impossible to be faithless. Then yielding, without

* Mark xiv. 29–31.

reflection, to the influence of the late hour, the coolness and shade, he slept. Jesus, in great sadness, had said, "Tarry ye here and watch."* And a second and third time Peter fell into the same heaviness, notwithstanding the repeated counsel of the Saviour. He, upon whom the present had so much power, and knew so little how to fear a peril, when it was not presented to his view and did not move his heart, yielded in the hour of danger.

The decisive moment arrived. Peter, being yet troubled by his sleepiness, but retaining in his remembrance the desire of defending his master, and not having well understood his orders or comprehended his intentions, but impetuous and devoted, beholding the enemies, drew his sword, rushed forward, and struck at random. The other disciples, as zealous perhaps, but more reflecting, said unto Jesus "Shall we smite with the sword." † "Seeing," says St Luke, "what would follow." Peter did not wait but struck before Jesus could answer. "Then said Jesus unto Peter, "Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" ‡ He immediately healed the wound the sword had made. What an effect this unexpected miracle and singular defence should have produced upon this hasty man who had as yet heard and understood nothing! It is the

* Mark xiv. 34–41. † Luke xx. 11, 49. ‡ John xviii. 10.

Master himself, who prohibited resistance and delivered himself to the executioners. Jesus is bound, they lead him away, he does not wish to be defended. Ought not this, to have perplexed and obscured that judgment, in which impressions were more powerful than ideas, and where the art of examining circumstances and distinguishing shades of difference, was unknown? Jesus did not wish to be defended, they led him away — he is a captive. All that was positive and clear in the plans of Peter must needs fail him at the time. Even then, he declared that he would be faithful to his Master, defend him, fight by his side, follow him to prison and to death. He is prohibited, and he knows not in what his duty now consists. Passive, inert, and submissive fidelity, to which he is now called, did not enter his imagination. There were no more contests and victories, no miracles to confound the enemies of the Messiah. Instead of those beautiful images which quickened his blood, and doubled his ardor, he discovered in the obscurity of his thoughts, chains, a tribunal, furious and triumphant judges, opprobrium and death. What must he do? For want of clear ideas and fixed projects, his heart guides him, he follows Jesus. He follows, but not as formerly, encouraged by his regard, walking by his side and in prospect of reward. He follows, not with glory, hope and courage, but at a distance, accompanied by John

alone, in darkness, avoiding the looks of a savage horde. It is through favor, and by stealth, that he is admitted into the enclosure of the palace. For such a man, this manner of following and entering, is, already, dissimulation, I had almost said, infidelity. This is not all; at each moment some new circumstance terrifies his wavering mind, and fills it by degrees with constraint and terror. The obscurity of night, the light of flambeaux and fires, the doorkeepers, the savage priests who arrive, in order, as vultures at the odor of carnage, the brutal boastings of subalterns eager to take part in the passions of their masters, each moment, each object, each word, more and more troubles and terrifies this hasty being, who had no control over his first impressions and his imagination. Self-control is gone, his intelligence is obscured, and he endeavors in vain to recollect himself. Now when an unknown voice struck upon his ear harshly demanding, "*Were you not also with this man?*" what could he do? The doorkeepers who had seized his master encompassed him, and the sword which had wounded Malchus hung still bloody by his side. From whence, in this crisis, could he derive sufficient judgment and calmness to distinguish between prudence and apostacy, to speak what was necessary and to act with boldness? If he could however have met at this moment, the look of his Master, if his noble and melancholy figure could

have recalled his promises, or if it had been a more authoritative voice, before the assembled Sanhedrim, that he was called upon to answer, the solemnity of the appeal would have aroused his conscience, and supported him in escaping from the abyss. But it was a servant, an impertinent and babbling woman, from whom it was necessary to be free. As usual, without reflection, he yielded to the impulse of the moment and circumstances, — and said "I know not the man."

Can one be surprised that this fault should have been twice repeated? And that the unhappy Peter should shortly come to positive denials and affirmations? Once fallen into the precipice, from whence could he have derived the force of character necessary for his liberation? His grief for the fault increased his agitation, and assisted his feebleness in sinking him yet deeper in the gulph. For his rescue there is need of a friendly hand, and he is alone with the hateful images of that horrible night. His heart however is right and the instant that he repents, he will become again himself. In order to accomplish this, there is no need of punishment or reproaches; — words even will be superfluous, for his heart will say what they cannot express: one look of Jesus is sufficient for this tender, ardent and changeable being. He departs, he weeps, and through the power of grief and love, has already expiated his fault. One look

causes him to triumph over his fears and weakness. This is an admirable denouement, and partakes too much of the sublimest feelings and truth, to be the invention of an imposter.

Let us now seek Peter on the border of the sea of Tiberias, in the chapter with which St. John terminates his gospel. There we shall be able to admire still further the inimitable truth of his character, still the same, although modified by grief and shame.

Peter is engaged in fishing, when he hears these words which John addressed to him; "It is the Lord."* The Lord whom he had deceived, and to whom he had sworn fidelity even unto death. He is there — the apostles are there — Jesus is about to speak. What will he say? How must his troubled mind have been kept in suspense between hope and fear — shame and love; and with what true and natural simplicity, the plain recital of the evangelist permits us to perceive these impressions.

It is the Lord: Peter immediately rushes into the waves on the side where Jesus is. It is towards him that his first movement hurries him, but more than ever respect is joined to love. He resumes his raiment when casting himself into the sea. Jesus expresses a wish and immediately, first of all, Peter has crossed the water and re-ascended the vessel, wishing to prove his zeal but not daring to

* Verse 7.

speak. How heavily must the thought of his crime have filled and oppressed the heart of him, whom formerly nothing could have restrained from expressing his feelings or doubts.

Jesus speaks; then commences that sublime scene, in which, without one word of reproach, by a simple question three times repeated, the Saviour found means to recall to his disciple his fault, and to punish him by appearing not to have a very strong belief in his love; thus causing him to express all the ardor of his repentance, and to know that he was forgiven.* But what is most important for us to remark here, are the answers of the apostle: they are as sincere and ardent as ever, but for the first time delivered with timidity and brevity. If before his fault, Jesus had three times successively appeared to doubt his tenderness, with what hasty and precipitate vehemence would he not have justified himself? But now, ashamed, humbled, and disquieted, he could only think upon his punishment, the more severe because it was merited. He appeals to the knowledge of his Master, to testify to that, which his words alone have no more the right of asserting. "Lord thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." How simple and true! We recognise the human heart — the heart of the apostles — the language of nature and not of fiction.

* Verses 15—17.

This scene, so remarkable for the change effected upon Peter, finishes by a trait of a nature less elevated, which exhibits to us however the same character. Jesus announced to the apostles his martyrdom and says "Follow me:" Peter seems hardly to have given attention; the only answer which he makes to the prediction of the Son of God, foretelling that a bloody death would afford him an opportunity to retrieve his fault, is a misplaced question, as to the apostle John, "Lord, and what shall this man do?" At this solemn moment his indiscretion well merited him a severe rebuke. Is not one such trait as this a sufficient pledge of truth?

We have examined a discourse and a character, selected almost at random from our gospels. We might draw the same consequences from all the narrations and facts, and from those natural recitals with which the book abound. But it is necessary to have a limit.

SECTION SECOND.

COMPARISON OF OUR GOSPELS WITH THE APOCRYPHAL BOOKS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

NATURAL and genuine beauties are not generally the best appreciated. Where all is harmony, simplicity and truth, no striking part awakens the distracted attention, and it requires a pure taste, a sa-

gacious mind and an elevated soul to recognize the full value of such an uniformity. Experience confirms this truth in an hundred different ways. Grecian architecture makes but little impression upon those accustomed to observe gothic monuments, and the verses of Racine seem to novices of easy construction, precisely, because no fault recalls the conquered difficulty. A similar illusion often prevents us from discovering the divine beauties of our gospels.

That which distinguishes them the most from all human writings, is, in the first place, their harmony with the heart and wants of man, in all countries and in all ages. It is also their perfect simplicity, exempted from effort and false brilliancy, and their grandeur, the principal elements of which are purity and truth. But these are beauties which general readers seldom perceive. In order to do so, there is required a habit of reflection and analysis. It is clearly observed that the gospel is useful in consoling, instructing and elevating us, and that it is adapted indeed to our heart; but few think how marvellous it is, that this gospel should be equally adapted to the heart of man, in all times and in all places. This is the wonder, which is offered to our observation, and which we do not know how to perceive. A contrast will aid us perhaps in accomplishing this, and the apocryphal books of the New Testament furnish it.

Two or three centuries after our gospels, the church was inundated by a mass of false writings which received the names of the apostles, and were given to the world as their works. These false gospels were the work of men educated in christianity and were composed in the presence, and in imitation of the true gospels. They have of course borrowed some of their beauties. Notwithstanding the efforts of the writers however, the difference is such, that it is sufficient, I here affirm, to prove the divinity of the authentic history of the Saviour. It is by comparing these writings, that we discern clearly the language of truth and imposture. One particular circumstance will give more interest and force to this conclusion. These apocryphal writings appear to be frequently the fruit of popular traditions concerning the infancy of Jesus Christ, and his mother and relations. We find also, not only the works of individual imposters, but the successive and in some manner the national works of the compatriots and companions of the Saviour, the result of the imagination, the opinions and prejudices of the time, we behold with what our gospels would have been infallibly filled, if they had not been divine. But so many traits of human passions and imperfections are exhibited in the apocrypha, that the absence of all these faults, causes us to see clearly the astonishing sublimity displayed in our gospels.

This comparison will be fully developed. We shall sketch it under four heads.

1. Relative to the employment of miraculous power.

2. Relative to the nature and form of the narrative.

3. Relative to the lessons and examples of virtue.

4. Relative to the views of the writers, and the tendency of the writings.

ARTICLE I.

Employment of the miraculous power.

Man has a natural inclination for the marvellous, but this is subjected to a double law, the influence of which is readily observed in literary fictions. We love the marvellous surrounded by magnificence and eclat. Without these, it does not long satisfy the imagination; and reason recovers her sway. In the second place, man loves in the marvellous the ground which he would have himself given to it if it had been at his disposal. It is in the service of his desires, his curiosity, and his ambition that he wishes it to be placed. Moreover, when the marvellous is introduced into his books, it always leaves the deep impress of some one of these passions, at the same time that it reflects the

genius and the prejudices of the country in which the writer has lived.

Now we do not remark any thing similar in the miracles of the New Testament. With a very small number of exceptions the miraculous power is deprived of all pomp. It moves the heart, but it leaves the imagination sufficiently calm. It tends to save, console and convince, never to amuse or dazzle. But the cotemporaries of Jesus were not more than half satisfied. The lepers were healed, the paralytic raised, the dead called to life; these beneficent and quiet miracles excited the gratitude of the immediate subjects of the benefit, but the Pharisees and the multitude were not converted. They demanded signs from heaven.*

* The following excellent remarks on the disbelief of the Pharisees, are taken from Mr Furness' "Remarks on the Four Gospels." As they are so satisfying and convincing upon this point, the translator thought they might gratify the reader of this treatise.

"We are given to understand with the utmost explicitness in these books, that Jesus was possessed of the most extraordinary powers—that he could heal the sick, give sight to the blind, and raise the dead by a word. Numerous instances are detailed with remarkable particularity, in which, in the most public and satisfactory manner, he exercised these miraculous gifts. But on more than one occasion, we are told that some of the principal men of the community came to him and requested him to perform a miracle, to give them a sign, thus affording him an opportunity, as it would seem, of convincing them of his authority as a messenger from heaven. 'How long,' said they with apparently great plausibility, 'how long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.' On these occasions, as the historians have not hesitated to inform us, he directly and uniformly refused to comply with the requests made to him. They give us no explanation of the reasons of his re-

Moreover, in the miracles of the New Testament, we find no marks of those passions which do not fail to leave their traces upon the works of man. There is nothing to excite ambition or desire. The

fusal. They leave him open to the charge of having evaded an appeal apparently very fair.

"It is not my immediate purpose to state the grounds of the conduct of Jesus in these cases. Still, as it admits of an explanation at once sound and rational, not only in accordance with, but illustrative of, the dignity of his character, and the spirituality of his object, I may be permitted to hint at it in passing. The Jewish nation, as I have already had occasion to state, cherished the fond expectation of the appearance of a military leader and king, who should deliver them from Roman bondage, and place them where, as the peculiar people of God, they fancied they belonged, at the head of the human race. The existence of this expectation is proved incidentally, and therefore the more satisfactorily, by the christian records. So we need not resort to other witnesses to establish this point, although they are not wanting. How tenaciously this hope clung to the minds of the Jews, may be attested from the conduct and feelings of the adherents of Jesus. They evidently expected him to establish a worldly kingdom, and to distribute among them its chief offices and honors, and out of this expectation there frequently rose among them jealousy and strife. After all he had said and done to the contrary, they still cherished this hope to the very last. And just before his final disappearance, their language is 'Lord wilt thou now restore the kingdom to Israel?' As confidently as the Jews looked for a Messiah, they looked for him to be a temporal prince and deliverer.

"Seeing then that this expectation existed so widely and deeply, is it not natural to infer that those who demanded of Jesus a sign from heaven, failed of being convinced by what he did actually say and do, because, although it proved him to be no ordinary man, still it did not carry out and realize their darling idea of the Christ? They wanted him to assume a character and to perform miracles conformable to their cherished and pre-established notions. Indeed it may be gathered from the Jewish writings, that an idea was entertained that the Messiah when he came, would give some peculiar token or signal—some extraordinary display of power, to point him out to the people as the Messiah beyond the possibility of a mistake. It was not he that made the Pharisees to doubt. Their doubts resulted from their own preposessions." Page 53, 54.

miracles of Jesus Christ are benefits, and these benefits never endanger virtue. If in multiplying the loaves of bread, he excited for an instant the greediness of a rude crowd, he deprived it quickly of its eagerness, and soon repelled it, by permanent truths; elsewhere, he refused to change the stones into bread to abridge his own sufferings; he did not descend from the cross when challenged by the railleries of his enemies; the winds and the waves were obedient to him, but his whole life, not less than his precepts, called his disciples to humility, simplicity and moderation. Nothing was performed to excite curiosity; the Saviour sought on the contrary to subdue and destroy it. He who was able to read the heart, and foresee future events, did not grant one word to the wishes of this passion.

The miracles have also, in general, a character of seriousness, dignity and decorum, which we ought little to expect meeting among the Jews. There is nothing misbecoming the Son of God. His cotemporaries could not perceive and appreciate the sublime and beautiful simplicity of his remark to Lazarus, "*Come forth;*" to the leper "*I will it, be thou clean;*" to the thief, "*This day shalt thou be with me.*" After the lapse of eighteen centuries, this language is better understood. The philosopher who meditates upon it, and the theologian who analyzes it, find there alike the seal of divinity.

If we do not always perceive this, it is through want of reflection, and the contrast which would detach these noble scenes from the common ground with which we are tempted to confound them. This contrast is furnished by the apocrypha.

We recognize here the ordinary impress of man, and that species of the marvellous which is pleasing to him. This impress, is however, somewhat diminished by the imitation of the true gospels, under the influence of which these false histories arose. They have preserved of course, to a certain extent, the character and spirit of Jesus and his apostles, for it is of them they discourse. We do not find as in the second book of Macabees,* celestial cavaliers clothed in gold and fire, but the sick are cured, and the dead raised. These authors wished to complete our gospels by the aid of popular tradition. The imagination, the feebleness and the passions of these writers, however, betray them in every part of their writings.

The striking and universal character of all the apocryphal books of the New Testament, is the multitude of useless and ridiculous miracles in conformity with the taste of the Jews, or the imagination of the Greeks, but unworthy of the Saviour, and far removed from the sublime simplicity of his history. The apocrypha, for instance, surround-

* Chap. iii, 24—27; v. 1—4.

ed the birth, infancy and betrothment of the virgin with disguised imitations of the miracles of the Bible — principally of those which accompanied the birth and infancy of the Saviour.* A miracle is necessary to give a husband to Mary; Joseph is chosen like Aaron by the miraculous vegetation of his rod, and a dove represents the Holy Spirit descending upon him in order that he may be designated.† Shortly after his birth Jesus makes a speech to his mother, and afterwards the games of the divine infant are miracles; the potter's clay being kneaded under his hand, becomes animated; he amuses himself in thus creating sparrows and causing them to walk, fly and eat at command.‡ We can open the book and the first page, taken at random, will present some trait of this kind or perhaps some score, even less worthy of the history of a holy and pure Being.

In the second place we frequently meet in all the apochryphal books the marvellous surrounded by magnificence. These dazzling and useless wonders are frequent in human fictions, but rare in the New Testament. The oriental imagination has greatly inspired the pages of the false writings we are examining, and certain passages recall much more readily the Arabian Nights than the gospels.

* See the Gospel, of Mary and James.
† Gospel of Mary, v. vi.
‡ Gospel of the Infancy, xv. 1—4.

A light more brilliant than the sun filled the cavern where Jesus Christ was born.* The holy infant disenchants a young man who had been changed into a mule.† He punishes his comrades for their malicious games by changing them into kids.‡ Thirty years after, when he appeared before Pilate, the Roman standard bent down in worship.§

If we find in the apocryphal writings the bad taste of the Jews and the imagination of the orientals, we shall not fail meeting also the traits of human passions, curiosity, vanity and revenge. Without doubt the imitation of the gospels has preserved the apocrypha from many shameful extravagances, without which their pages would have been covered. But deprived of the divine succor, the apocryphal biographers have not been able to appreciate and retrace the character of Jesus. All is human, that is to say, all is vain and selfish in the traits added to the history of traditions.‖ If our gospels were the

* Gospel of the Infancy, i. 9, 10. † Idem, xvii. ‡ Idem, vii.

§ Gospel of Nicodemus.

‖ My pen was on the paper ready to trace the words of our author in several additional quotations from the apocryphal book, but recollecting for whom I was translating — my Sunday School class — I refrained, believing that the reading of such ridiculous narrations, although it must make a powerful impression on their young minds, would be superfluous. The quotations already made are sufficient, in clearly manifesting the falsity of these pretended works. I would refer those however who are desirous of pursuing the investigation further, to the Gospel of the Infancy, chapter xix, 20 — 24; xx, 13 — 18; or to Cellerier's Treatise, page 190.

work of man, it is probably under similar views that they would present the life of our Master, the *mild and humble of heart.* Is not this a proof that they are really the work of God?

ARTICLE II.

Nature and form of the narration.

The comparison of the gospels and the apocryphal books under this new point of view is not less striking than under the first. Besides, these two parts of the parallel which engage our attention, although really distinct, have much analogy.

There are in the evangelical narrations certain characteristics which distinguish them from human books, and are the sublime and remarkable tokens of their true and celestial origin.

The evangelists do not yield any thing to curiosity. They proceed directly to the point under consideration, and keep in view the design of the revelation. Thus they all keep an almost absolute silence as to the infancy, the youth and private life of the Saviour. They are not disquieted at exciting curiosity, and have no desire to satisfy it.

They relate every thing with the same simplicity, calmness and, I had almost said indifference. They had beheld the miracles and they relate them without any reflection, as ordinary and well known

events to which Jesus had accustomed them. They love their master and they prove it; but they do not speak of their affection; they well know that it is not with them and their opinion that the reader is concerned. They have heard the discourses of Jesus and they repeat them, but almost mechanically and sometimes as if they had not understood them. They are little anxious in leaving gaps in their narrations, in culling forth objections, in astonishing or offending. They have not written their memoirs — they have not written a book — they are not authors. Ingenuous and sincere witnesses, they are satisfied in giving their testimony.

In fine, these simple and unpretending depositions, are all impressed with a minute exactness peculiar to a faithful eye-witness. However incomplete may be their narration, the evangelists add in abundance the small details, which, in their remembrance, encompassed the events they recount. It is true these details appear useless, but how important they are as pledges of naturalness and truth! The authors do not relate them to amuse or reveal their knowledge. It is simply for the sake of exactness and fidelity. They have seen and heard the fact, or lesson, with its accompanying circumstances, and it requires some art or labor to separate them. But this they do not attempt.

They simply report whatever they have remembered and as they remembered; as they yet seem to behold and hear. What faith, accordingly, do not these narrations inspire!

These narrations, indeed, so simple and little labored, are found to be in remarkable agreement with historical facts. We discover no anachronisms or errors. These writers were not learned but they were faithful. They have spoken only of those things which took place in their time, and under their eyes; they were, also, never deceived.

Such are the ordinary characteristics of the evangelical narrations. Let us now compare them with the apocryphal histories. These will present to us entirely opposite traits.

The apocryphal books seem designed entirely to satisfy curiosity, for which our gospels are so little adapted. The Gospel of Mary, the Gospel of the Infancy, the Gospel of Thomas, the Gospel of Nicodemus, all, in this respect, have one design and one spirit. They are full of those useless and curious details which our evangelists do not give, and which inconsiderate minds demand. The history of the infancy of the Virgin Mary, the numerous details upon the infancy of Jesus, upon his voyage into Egypt, upon Zacharias, the recital of the actions of the divine spirit of Jesus in heaven while his body was captive to the tomb, comprise their narrations. They add nothing which is

satisfactory or useful. Our gospels, however, have not told all; they recount the history only of some portions of the ministry of Jesus. There is, without doubt, a multitude of lessons and actions of our Saviour forever lost to us, and which the pious Christian sometimes surprises himself in regretting, with too much anxiety. Not one of these precious fragments has been recovered from the apocrypha. They seem to have place only for curious, absurd, or coarse trifles. These traditions which they gather, undoubtedly preserved nothing more interesting or more true. What a demonstration of the natural tendency of man, at least of those men of that age, and of the fate which would have awaited our gospels had they been written by these persons.

There is not among these writers, either simplicity, self-forgetfulness, naturalness in the details, or exactness and precision in the narration, but a continual mingling of pretension, affectation, and oriental bombast. We find, also, an evident solicitude in preventing objections and obscurities, and a desire to relate more clearly, more completely, and more elegantly than the fishermen of Galilee have done, or knew how to do. Misbecoming trifles have also taken the place of the simple, natural, and chaste narrations of our gospels.

The apocryphal histories abound in anachronisms and errors. They continually present opin-

ions and customs admitted in the time of their authors, but unknown in the time of the Saviour, and for some ages after. The Virgin is called Our Lady, and St. Mary.* She intercedes, with her son, for those who invoke her assistance, and she promises them pardon. The sign of the cross is practised;† the relics of Jesus are guarded, and worship rendered them;‡ miracles are performed, or, at least, the swaddling clothes of the infant Jesus and the water in which he has been washed, cure the sick and expel demons.§ We can, perhaps, attribute the anachronisms to secret views, and the errors, to the design of supporting certain customs or doctrines; but we discover an historical error which is undoubtedly occasioned by the ignorance of the writer. The third chapter of the Gospel of Nicodemus is entirely borrowed from our gospels, excepting one verse only, which was undoubtedly designed by the author to explain what appeared obscure. It is remarkable that this verse, the only one added for his own views, should betray an entire ignorance of the political state, and even of the religion and laws of the Jews at the time of Jesus Christ. It is found in the narration of the complaint of Pilate, and the inquiries of Jesus; "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death,"

* Gospel of the Infancy, i. 11, 17.
† Gospel of Nicodemus, xii. 24.
‡ Gospel of the Infancy, ii. 1, 3; iii.
§ Idem vi. 16, 17; ix—xiii.

say the accusers, in St. John,* and in the apocryphal writer. But this last, instead of beholding in those words the loss of the independence of the Hebrews, has known how to explain them only by the sixth commandment. He has concluded that the law of Moses interdicted the punishment of death; and finding, moreover, that the silence of Pilate on this occasion was not seemly or probable, he has placed in his mouth an answer, which would have better become a rabbin, "This commandment—'*Thou shalt not kill*,'—concerns you, but does not regulate my actions."

ARTICLE III.

Lessons and examples of virtue.

We ought to discover here one of the most important criterions of the divinity of our gospels. A divine religion should excite man to divine virtue. We know in general, how the gospels accomplish this task, but we do not know how under this point of view, they compare with the apocryphal writings.

The apocrypha were written last. Their authors, acquainted with the canonical gospels, undertook to imitate them and called themselves Christians. If they had faithfully embraced the sublime beauties of the lessons and the life of Jesus and the

* John, xviii. 31.

apostles, their works would not have been on this account worthy of the same admiration. The gospels would always have had a great superiority in having been the first to relate that which the others could only have repeated. We perhaps even think that this last task is very easy — these writers did not succeed. How could they have invented what they have not been able to relate?

What do we find that is useful and good in these books, which pretend to be the history of Jesus, the work of his apostles, the deposit of *the light of the world?* Absolutely nothing. This distinguishes them more than any thing else from our gospels. Their authors thought only of satisfying human curiosity.

In the second place, their books have disfigured the character of Jesus. They make him a vain being, who takes pleasure in showing his power and science, by teaching natural philosophy, metaphysics and astrology, instead of announcing the good tidings; he is also represented as a cruel divinity, who revenges himself without pity and without justice.

In the third place, these writings everywhere display instead of the divine virtues which christianity inspires, human passions and frailties. There is nothing elevated, grand, pure or mild in the spirit which inspires them. The soul is continually grieved, at finding the divine name of the

Saviour mingled with ideas, narrations and actions, unworthy of him. There is a perpetual disagreement which rends the heart, instead of that celestial harmony, which in our gospel encompasses the Saviour. Sometimes improper fictions and coarse details betray impure minds. We recognise the orientals, whose effeminate hearts christianity has not been enabled entirely to sanctify, but not the apostles, in whose soul the spirit of their Master would never have permitted an impure thought to dwell. Sometimes human avarice is plainly exhibited, in the pretended history of him who had no place where to lay his head. It seems, in the apocryphal writing, that Mary negociated for gold, the miracles of her son; and sometimes the historian is pleased to speak of rich presents which recompensed him. Indeed, the only virtue which these writers appear to recognise, are the arrogant and proud which Jesus came to unthrone, and the monastic, which in their age the Christian church had commenced borrowing from the pagans.

What a veneration for our gospels must this contrast inspire in the thoughtful reader. From whence then did they obtain these traits, at the same time, so pure, so mild, so simple, and so sublime, with which they clothe the christian virtues. This is not a brilliant work which attracts our regard and dazzles at first view; but it is one which deeply affects the heart and produces a mighty

change. The multitude despises it, perhaps, but the sensible and enlightened man loves and adores it.

It is to our gospels, alone, that the glory of a constant, useful and beneficent end, is due. It is there only, that all tends to the holiness and regeneration of man, that all elevates, that all purifies, that nothing is designed to amuse his curiosity or flatter his passions.

It is to our gospels alone, that the character of Jesus Christ belongs, a type of christian virtue, revealing an admirable harmony of sweetness and dignity, of reason and love, of prudence and simplicity. Where have we ever beheld so much devotion joined to so much calmness, and such an heroic life so strongly marked with wisdom and good sense? But this grandeur, deprived of pomp and splendor, and veiled under such humble traits, is not easily appreciated by common men. To admire worthily, it is necessary to reunite in a considerable degree, elevation of sentiment with richness of thought, and I had almost said purity of taste.

Far, then, very far from our gospels, are these false and absurd apocrypha, which, written afterwards, in the bosom of Christianity, and sometimes by ingenious men, have disfigured whatever they have handled. They are the work of man, with his corruption and weakness; but our gospels are the inspiration of him who is Spirit and Truth.

ARTICLE IV.

Design of the Authors.

An author who delivers his thoughts to the public, is always influenced thereto, by some powerful motive. In other words, he has a design, of which his writings will bear the impress, and the knowledge of which will powerfully aid the reader in appreciating the writer and his works. In studying a book under this point of view, we shall attain a much better knowledge of its author than he supposes. Sometimes we behold him aspiring to the success of a genius, sometimes simply to the small enjoyments of vanity, and sometimes giving a body to his thoughts, and a voice to his feelings, only through the most urgent want. He wishes sometimes to promulgate an idea, sometimes to lessen an abuse, sometimes to overturn a doctrine. Often, with a perfidious talent, an imposter conceals his march, insinuates what he dares not declare openly, and lays down principles, leaving it to his readers to draw consequences. He raises with affected indifference the question which is nearest to his heart, and spreads abroad the germs of evil, which the passions do not fail in nourishing. It is of little importance whether the author has written for interest, conscience, zeal, or any other motive; he is always depicted in his book, and if he has

wished to masque himself under borrowed plumes, to the eye of the intelligent reader he is surely betrayed. How important and interesting must such a study be when applied to our gospels, especially if we bring them in contrast with the apocrypha.

It would be easy, it would even be amusing, to discover in each of these the ill-disguised tokens of all human imposition. But this examination would be of very little advantage. It is not these books, but our gospels, we wish to examine. It is sufficient to recall to memory the constant character of the one, in order to make apparent the sincerity of the other. I have said enough in another place to prove this, and it is not necessary to resume the question in this new form. We will now draw our remarks to a conclusion. The most attentive examination of our gospels, do not disclose any human design. They neither flatter any passion, or seek to satisfy curiosity. They are evidently strangers to the motives which influence ordinary writings, and are continually governed by a unique and sublime design—the regeneration of man. This is a result forced upon our conviction at every page and line. They announce *the good tidings*, and do not trouble themselves with anything else. A compassionate love for suffering and corrupted humanity, is the divine principle of which they are the result, and no impure alloy can mingle itself

with this pure element. Is not this character, alone, sufficient to convince us of their divinity?

The comparison which we have now made, will, undoubtedly, prove much, in the view of every sensible and sincere mind. If we cannot find a rigorous demonstration, there is, however, a moral conviction which persuades the heart and reason.

What must we think, after this examination, of those blind enemies of the faith who have wished to put upon the same footing the apocryphal writings and our gospels? Without having studied, without having read, perhaps, one or the other, and in opposition to all historical criticism, they have dared to attribute both to the same origin; and, in order to explain the preference given to our sacred books, they have wished to discover no other cause than accident or superstition. How clearly does this make manifest their want of knowledge and good faith.

The wise and impartial reader has, undoubtedly, no need of comparing the gospels with the apocrypha in order to admire the first. Historical and critical study is sufficient to convince him of their truth. But if he has made a comparison, the contrast is too astonishing not to be instantly observed, and cause him to distinguish, at once, the work of God and of man. He believes the gospels, and perhaps imagines that he knows and perceives their beauty; but the contrast of so much purity and

impurity, of so much grandeur and weakness, of so much wisdom and folly, causes them to appear so much the more beautiful. It seems as if faith had penetrated his whole soul; his heart throbs with that pure joy, which the undoubted conviction of an important truth excites, and full of gratitude he exclaims with the Apostle, "*I know that which I believe.*"

CHAPTER THIRD.

PROPOSITIONS RELATIVE TO THE INTEGRITY OF THE GOSPELS.

Our conviction of the authenticity of the gospels and of the veracity of the evangelists, will be of little value, if we have any doubts regarding the actual state of the purity and integrity of these writings. It is necessary for our faith, that they should have descended to us without any important alteration, and that they should be free from suspicion. This is, indeed, the true state of the case, and my plan will not be completed if I do not indicate the proofs. These rest, in the first place, upon the vigilance of pious and learned men, who in all times have labored in preserving the sacred text, in multiplying copies, in comparing words, and in discussing differences; and they rest, in the second place, upon the positive and evident result of these labors. Their nature does not permit me to undertake their explanation. I limit myself to a relation, as brief and clear as possible, of the most important facts which are useful to be known, and I ask my

reader's indulgence and patience for this dry, but short and important chapter.

The text of the gospels was spread, with the religion of Jesus, over the whole Roman empire. The numerous churches which a divine hand had rapidly spread over the surface of every civilized region, venerated these books as the foundation of their faith. The text was read, commented upon, translated, and diffused, wherever the faithful were found. Learned and industrious men had no other occupation than to transcribe the New Testament; cities made a trade of these copies; learned critics employed their time in searching after, and in collecting different copies. The slightest, and even the most insignificant differences of the text, excited contradictions, accusations, suspicions, and sometimes violent disputes and anathemas. Never has a profane work found itself so universally diffused, guarded by so many hands, and subjected to such an active and troublesome inspection.

This excessive multiplication of copies, in guarantying the preservation of the text, introduced, necessarily, slight alterations. The thousands of copyists who transcribed, of commentators who explained, and of preachers and doctors who quoted it, could not avoid making errors, through want of attention, of judgment, or of memory; it was impossible that the errors due to these four caus-

es, and often countenanced by passion or party spirit, when introduced, should not be repeated and often propagated. From thence have arisen the numerous differences in the hundreds of manuscripts, commentaries, and versions, which we yet possess. These differences critics call *variations* or *readings*.

For several ages these variations have been carefully sought after and collected. We have wished, or ought to have wished, to know all, although many are very insignificant. The text was a sacred deposit, and, in order to render the sense inviolable, it is necessary to regard, as equally inviolable, the words and letters. In consequence of observing the omissions, the additions, and the transpositions of an article or particle, more than thirty thousand variations have been recorded.

Does this numerous array of variations weaken the integrity of the New Testament? Can it trouble the security of the faithful? On the contrary it strengthens and guaranties both. We can hardly convince ourselves. In order to have confidence we must have knowledge; and if the then different manners in which the same word has been written, or certain phrases turned, are unknown to us, we may well fear of being ignorant of the truth. We can affirm, with regard to each verse of the gospels, that we know at least how they were read in different ages and in various churches. We are

certain that no interpolation has been able to be introduced without being perceived. Who dares say as much for the verses of Homer, or even the phrases of Tacitus? The mistrustful man, who suspects an error in the text of the gospels preserved in five hundred manuscripts, reads, however, with entire faith, some classic writer who has not been preserved in five.

If, moreover, we examine these variations in order to appreciate their importance, we immediately perceive that they have none. In limiting ourselves to those which are able for an instant to sustain the examination, we reduce our thirty thousand to ten thousand. Of these, three or four hundred, at the most, would be observed in one version, and there are not more than one hundred which have, in reality, any influence upon the meaning. And I do not know in the gospels but one or two, and in the rest of the New Testament hardly a dozen, which bear upon any material point.

These variations, moreover, important or otherwise, have been studied and discussed for some years with an industry, a method, and an erudition, of which those unacquainted with criticism, have no idea.

This work again, has caused to be disclosed a fact of the greatest importance, and which by its consequences is sufficient of itself, alone, to guar-

anty conviction and faith. By this laborious and continual application of a gigantic labor to microscopic results, some celebrated critics have proved, that the writings under consideration were naturally divided among particular classes in certain regions; that those of Constantinople, for example, or rather of Alexandria, present almost always the same text and the same variations. From this circumstance these ingenious men have been able, with patience and time, to classify these, to give in some manner their history, and to point out those which have been used in each church and in each country. They have been able also to separate the copies into geographical groups, between which the discussion has been conducted and the decision made more easy. This important fact permits us to neglect all those variations in copies which are found not to be peculiar to any church or age; it affords us, moreover, the proof so interesting to obtain, that no lesson of any importance remains unknown. In other words, the integrity of our gospel is forever secured; but to prove this with sufficient clearness, some details are necessary, upon which we will now enter.

Let us no longer fear that the investigations of the critics may threaten to overthrow our belief in the integrity of our gospels. We are convinced that science cannot support an attack against this precious truth. New versions and new manu-

scripts will always be useful and interesting for consultation; but we can affirm, beforehand, with truth, that they can bring no new, important, or weighty variation. This necessarily results from the fact that the different classes of copies are known, and that the text used in each country and in each age has been sufficiently studied. It is of little importance, therefore, how many manuscripts may yet be unknown. The integrity of the gospels is, then, placed above all doubt, and the same good Being who gave us these books, has watched over their preservation.

CHAPTER FOURTH.

PROPOSITIONS RELATIVE TO THE PARTICULAR NATURE OF EACH GOSPEL.

We have hitherto considered the gospels as a homogeneous work, which is not in reality the case. It is necessary now to indicate the principal marks which distinguish them from each other.

This investigation is not simply an affair of curiosity. To judge correctly of the gospels, it is necessary to have a distinct knowledge of them. And this knowledge will add much to the force of the proof for their authenticity, for it will reveal to us many traits of naturalness and sincerity, which would otherwise have passed unnoticed. In investing each of these books with its own color and individuality, it impresses them with that variety, without which there would have been neither truth nor resemblance, for all the works of God, which are known to us, are thus impressed. In causing us to perceive the striking differences, it displays to us the marvellousness of their agreement. It explains to us, indeed, the reasons for the omissions and diversities which have given rise to doubts, and

often furnishes a complete solution. But it would be sufficient, in order to obtain favor for this investigation, simply to say, that it furnishes more exact and clear ideas concerning the gospels.

SECTION FIRST.

GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

We are acquainted with but three circumstances concerning the date and origin of this gospel: it was written before the destruction of Jerusalem, for the Christians of Palestine, and before the others. These facts have been called in question, but the critic and historian agree in maintaining their truth and in deriving from them some important consequences concerning our knowledge of the primitive church, the apocryphal gospels, and the mutual relation of our evangelists, and consequently for the truth of their inspiration. The plan of this sketch will not allow me to explain these consequences. I have enumerated them only to show the reader, how much can be gained by the researches, which this section is designed to commence.

Matthew, regarded as a writer, has a very marked character. His style is without art, careless, but rapid and well sustained. The evangelist

seems to disdain minute details, and is continually hastening onward to important and useful facts. In the discourses of Jesus Christ, he selects, or retains, in preference, whatever is practical and popular, and which tends to regulate the conduct and establish the morals. Nothing can better manifest this character of his gospel, than a contrast of it with that of John. These two apostles were with Jesus when he spoke upon the mountain, and in the temple; both had listened to the same discourses, but how differently they repeat them! If we compare the relation of Matthew with those of Mark and Luke, the difference is less striking, but it is yet real; it is not discovered in the selection of the recitals or discourses, but in the details; Matthew is, in general, more concise, and it is in his gospel, that we more frequently find the essential ideas and facts. He reports the miracles of his Master, but, contrary to the other evangelists, he seems more attentive to report his lessons. He alone has given the whole of the sermon upon the mount. He often proportions the illustration of the recital to the importance of the subject.—Thus when he relates the condemnation, the sufferings, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, changing his first method, he abounds in facts, words, and precious details; causing the heart of the Christian to rejoice, so much of the character, the teachings, the virtues of his master are dis-

played in all their brightness. Then resuming his rapid and abridged style, Matthew passes rapidly over all the facts succeeding the resurrection, and in three short verses gives a summary of the last instructions of the Saviour. But this brief summary is so full of matter that each word conveys an idea, and we find in it the christian morality and religion, the authority of the Saviour, the benefits promised to believers, the universality of christianity, and the particular nature of its operation. The other gospels, united with the Acts, furnish us, without doubt, more facts with regard to the Saviour after his resurrection, but they contain fewer lessons of instruction.

The gospel of Matthew, then, tends essentially to christian virtue. This gospel was also cherished by the Jewish Christians, to whom Matthew was the especial apostle. From the special character of many of the sacred writings, arises the wonderful privilege of the Bible in containing what is necessary for all minds and for all circumstances. From hence arose the preference which certain churches and ages seem sometimes to have manifested for particular books. Amid these different tendencies, those parts of the holy writings which recommend works above everything else, and give a greater value to faith, hold the first rank. The christian doctrine, we all know, is composed of many elements, which, being deposited in some one or another portion of the sacred books, ought

always to be combined in the faith, as they are in the Bible, in producing, without exaggeration and excess, precisely the desired effect; for thus Divine Wisdom has ordained, and the infinitely varied wants of the human soul demand. There is opposition between these different elements. Theology compels us to examine them separately, but faith reunites them to act upon the human heart.

SECTION SECOND.

GOSPEL OF MARK.

It is believed that the second evangelist wrote for the Romans and, according to the dictation of Peter. Besides some corrections in the order of events, the narration of Mark is distinguished by a great number of small and exact details, such as give life to history, naturalness to testimony, and confidence to the reader. Whether the gospel proceeds from Peter or Mark, we cannot but recognise in the author of the recital, an eye-witness, and a candid and faithful narrator, who remembers with exactness, and wishes to declare all, not even omitting immaterial circumstances, fearing lest the facts should be in the least changed. Compare, in Mark and in Matthew, the history of the demoniac of the Gadarenes;* how many circumstances does

* Mark v. 1—20, and Matthew viii. 28—34.

the second evangelist add! He relates his history anterior to his misfortune, he speaks of the tombs where he abode, the stones with which he wounded himself, and the name by which he was designated. When Jesus predicted the ruin of the temple, Matthew says simply,* that the disciples put certain questions upon the subject. Mark carefully informs us that four apostles only at this time addressed Jesus, and he tells us who they were. Peter, the guide of Mark, was one of the four, and he perhaps discloses himself as the author of this gospel by the detail. In another place, Mark, recounting the arrest of Jesus, speaks of a young man who fled, leaving his linen garments in the hands of the soldiers†. The name of this young man is not given, and the fact is of no consequence, but seems entirely useless and foreign to the narration. The evangelist relates it because he loves details, and maintains the most minute fidelity, wishing, without doubt, to preserve entire the narration of Peter.

In fine, Mark adds few lessons and important facts to the narration of Matthew — but he has done much for the frank and natural character of our evangelical history. It is interesting to compare him with the other evangelists, although he has nothing particular in his choice of the instruc-

* Matthew xxiv. 3, and Mark xiii. 3.
† Mark xiv. 51, 52.

tions which he has reported, represents no special religious tendency, and has not been preferred by any sect.

SECTION THIRD.

GOSPEL OF LUKE.

We do not know with certainty the period or the place of the writing of this gospel. We possess, however, a very particular and unique account of the designs of Luke. It is the preface prefixed by St. Luke to his work. We learn that he wrote to a Roman, wishing to furnish him with a complete and methodical biography of Christ. The style of this gospel is very correct and written with much care. The order of events is evidently very exact and complete. Luke divides, separates or transposes many of the lessons and narrations otherwise placed by his two predecessors. He reports many new circumstances and gives the history of an entire voyage of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem.* By these different traits we readily discover a more practised writer. The profession and country of Luke tend to strengthen this presumption. He is said to have been an inhabitant of Antioch and a physician.

If the third gospel has more order and method,

* Luke ix, 51—xviii, 14.

it has on the other hand a fainter coloring and less of life. We perceive in reading that the author was not a stranger to the art of writing, and that he was *exactly informed;* but we seem also to perceive that he was not an eye-witness, and that he wrote according to the relations of others. Although in general, inclined to considerable detail, he omits many circumstances. The history of the passion, in particular, is less complete than with Matthew.

As the gospel of Matthew was essentially the gospel of the Jewish Christians, the gospel of Luke belonged to those Christians who had withdrawn themselves from the ranks of paganism. We have seen that Marcion did not wish any other. In reality, however, this work has no real tendency and no peculiar character to justify this preference. It was occasioned only by the fact that Paul was the apostle of justification by faith, and that Luke his companion and assistant was wrongfully supposed to have written under his direction.

SECTION FOURTH.

GOSPEL OF JOHN.

We pass to the fourth gospel, an admirable book, from which is reflected as from a brilliant mirror the celestial and holy greatness of the Saviour.

This gospel was written a long time after the others, at the close of the first century, by the apostle of Ephesus, being then nearly a hundred years old, for the triple design of correcting some details in the evangelical history, of adding some new facts and lessons, and opposing some growing errors.

This of itself should impart a great interest to this gospel; but how much is this interest augmented by our knowledge of the author! John, was, with James and Cephas, the privileged witness of a small number of scenes from which the other disciples were removed. He was alone the courageous beholder of the passion of his master, he followed him even to the cross, assisted at his crucifixion and received his last words. The adopted son of the virgin Mary, he received her into his house, and must have obtained from his conversation with her a more entire knowledge of the history of the Saviour. He was moreover the well-beloved disciple of Jesus, and more intimate with him than any other. He owed this privilege without doubt to the circumstance that he resembled more than any other his divine model, and understood and knew better how to raise himself to that degree of love and charity to which the Redeemer called his disciples. It is this happy disciple, who, last of all, has written the life of his Master, and bequeathed to us the finishing work of that history,

already three times recounted. With what religious emotion should we not open his book?

At the first reading this gospel engages our attention, and the more we read the more we discover its richness in those qualities which tend to piety and faith.

As a history, it is the most faithful of the four. In the slight differences which distinguish their parellel narrations the greatest exactness appears always on the side of the fourth. It transmits to us a multitude of new facts and entire portions of the history of Jesus Christ before unknown. In reality, excepting the solemn scenes which terminated the ministry of Jesus Christ, the three first evangelists recount but few of the events which took place out of Galilee. In the journeys of the Saviour to Jerusalem they conduct him to the gates of this city and await his return to resume their labors as biographers. John, on the contrary, attaches himself principally and almost entirely to the ministry of Jesus within the compass of the city of David. It is from this circumstance that he transmits to us many new facts and precepts, and that his gospel, so different from the other three, forms a perfect completion of the gospel history. But that which especially distinguishes this book from those of Luke, Mark and Matthew, is the new character with which he clothes the instructions of the Saviour. Undoubtedly John has better re-

membered what the others had not so well understood; his elevated soul had been more astonished at those sublime precepts which perhaps the others did not even comprehend; without doubt also the lessons of Jesus were more developed and of a higher character when he stood in the presence of his enemies in the centre of Jerusalem and in the courts of the temple, than when he was upon the mountains of Galilee or among the rude fishermen of Capernaum. In place of the positive and practical character of the lessons collected by St. Matthew, the completion of the details joined together by St. Mark and the order and number of facts reunited by St. Luke, the gospel of John is distinguished by the numerous discourses of Jesus Christ heretofore omitted. It is no longer a learned man, it is no longer a prophet who speaks to man in their language, it is the Son of God who causes to be heard the language of heaven from which he is descended, but where he yet seems to dwell. John, occupied solely in displaying to us in Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace and the Son of God, seems to forget to behold in him the son of Mary; he neglects the narration of his terrestial life and his humble birth. This character of his gospel is very apparent. Sometimes it is expressed, by the giving to his book the name *Pneumatique*, or spiritual; sometimes by saying that the three first evangelists having written the history of the human

nature of Christ, John has consecrated his work to the divine nature. The different portions of the church have manifested for this gospel the highest degree of respect, and the faithful among christians have from thence drawn the profoundest and sweetest inspirations for their piety. On this account, various sects, churches and learned men, who are strongly attracted to a religion of sentiment and mystery, have been sometimes tempted to elevate it above others and to give it an exclusive preference. This is without doubt a heavy fault, since the entire Holy Word has been given to us to regulate our faith. And to preserve this pure and right before God it is necessary to receive with care all the gospel. The person who attaches himself in preference to one portion of the New Testament, proves by this that he follows his feelings rather than the real doctrine of the revelation.

Our rapid examination of the four gospels is finished; and how many sublime pages has it renewed in the memory! From the sermon on the mount to the pardon of St. Peter, in other words, from the first chapters of St. Matthew to the last lines of John, how many benefits and beauties! Happy is the human race in possessing such a treasure! It contains all that is necessary for man in any situation and circumstance of life. It can satisfy the wants of the cold reason, the feeling soul, the pure heart, the vivid imagination, the

vigorous and ambitious mind. Throughout we discover the same God, the same Saviour, the same truth, the same virtue. What diversity and yet what harmony!

SECTION FIFTH.

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

THE Acts of the Apostles belong to this division of our work. As an historical book, the companion of the gospels, and the second part of the gospel of St. Luke, they cannot be separated from the history of the Saviour.

They do not, strictly speaking, contain the history of the apostles, that of St. Paul, or of the primitive church: they relate to all these subjects. They are in reality, memoirs written by the evangelist Luke, upon the first apostolic labors and the first progress of the reign of Christ. The author appears to have limited himself to what he beheld or particularly knew. He develops many narrations relating to particular countries or persons. Sometimes he speaks in his own name, associating himself with his narration, and multiplying the details, and then passes to the third person, at the same time, contracting the limits of his recital. He is thus, so to speak continually approaching and

withdrawing from the scene, accompanying St. Paul or remaining separated from him. We must not then expect to find in the work, method or completeness. It is however of great value. It furnishes us with the fundamental facts of the primitive and sacred history of the church, the conversion of St. Paul, and the principal facts of his glorious apostleship. It assures us moreover of the authenticity of many of the epistles, by their hidden and singular coincidences with history. A reflecting man will be struck by the true union of enthusiasm and reason, of energy and mildness, of power and patience, of success and humility. We seek in vain the traces of human passions: it is evidently the work of God.

PART SECOND.

PROPOSITIONS RELATIVE TO THE EPISTLES.

PART SECOND.

We will now perform for the remainder of the New Testament what has been accomplished for the Gospels. This task however will be speedily terminated, for the most important work is finished, and that which has been proved, with respect to the Gospels, in a great measure is applicable to the Epistles. We will preserve the same order as before. We will speak in the first place of the authenticity of this part of the gospel, then of the character of the authors, and finally, of the particular nature of the writings.

CHAPTER FIRST.

AUTHENTICITY.

HISTORICAL PROOF.

In favor of the authenticity of the epistles we have nearly the same, or even stronger proof than in favor of the gospels, for the agreement of witnesses and critics has been constant and unanimous. There is however a distinction to be made. There have been from the most ancient times two classes of writings, those universally received, and those contested in certain places or by certain churches. These last were the epistle to the Hebrews — that of James, that of Jude, the second of

Peter, the second and third of John — and the apocalypse. It is, consequently, of the others only which we speak when we prove the authenticity of the epistles by the universal agreement of the churches.

The first three epistles of Paul, the first of Peter and the first of John, have for their authenticity the strongest historical proof which can be desired. And most of the others had in their favor at the period of the definite formation of the gospel canon the constant tradition of the special churches to which they had been directly addressed. Lardner believed that in the remains of the works of Irenæus, of Clement of Alexandria, and of Tertullian alone we find more numerous and extended quotations of the small volume called the New Testament, than we are able to discover of the works of Cicero during many ages and in the writings of all mankind. The epistles of Paul in particular, are quoted or mentioned, in nearly all the writings of the holy men and learned Christians of the generation which succeeded him. If there is any thing historically proved concerning the New Testament, it is that these epistles of the first century were read in the public worship as works of Paul; and we are not able to discover before the commencement of the fifth century, any attempt to force upon the public other writings, under his name.

As to the contested writings, the cause of doubt has been in general well known and completely

refuted; it is after a thorough examination of proof and testimony that the ancient church has universally admitted them. The reformers, faithful to their principles, submitted again the whole Bible to a close examination, and excluded from it the apocrypha of the Old Testament, which had been admitted by the Roman church; they however preserved the contested epistles, notwithstanding the strange doubts of Luther as to that of James. Calvin strongly doubted the authenticity of the epistle to the Hebrews and the second of Peter, but he admitted the apostolic authority of both. Since then the subject has been much discussed and clearly explained. In my opinion, according to good criticism, there is no longer any material for objection, than against these two. And they are moreover far from wanting plausible proofs and answers to difficulties. If the epistle to the Hebrews was not the work of St. Paul, it was probably written under his direction by one of the companions of his labors. Finally, let us not forget that the visible care of Providence for the whole canon of the New Testament, and the great benefit of which this collection has been the source, seem to constitute a moral proof for its perfect purity.

II. — *Critical Proof.*

We shall enlarge but little upon this kind of proof. In the examination of writings constantly

known, it seems almost useless, under agreement of historical testimony. Of what consequence is it to seek in the Æniad, or Orations against Cataline, the proof that Virgil was, indeed, the author of the first, and Cicero the second? The father Hardouin, alone, doubts. As to the writings formerly contested, it would be interesting, I confess, to discover the critical coincidences which we have observed in the gospels; but the nature of the writings does not permit us to have any such hope. In the first place, coincidences in the epistles, which unfold ideas, cannot be so much expected as in the gospels, which relate facts. In the next place, the same causes which have formerly exposed to objections these contested writings, are found to be incidental in removing the desired coincidences, or at least in preventing their being perceived. These causes, by a strange contrast, find themselves exactly suited to two opposite cases. These are, the vagueness of some epistles addressed to all the world, and the particular nature of others addressed to obscure persons. In the first case, no church being particularly charged to preserve such or such epistle, that of St. James for instance, and not bearing the testimony of that mission, the judges of its authenticity in the first ages, discovering that it failed in some one of the ordinary guarantees, hesitated to admit it. In the second, a trust, committed to unknown individuals, to *Caius*,

for example, or the *Elect Lady*,* remained unknown to some churches and whole regions. Now the first case greatly diminishes the probability, that the author, in writing the epistle, endeavored to create critical coincidences; for in addressing it to numerous and scattered churches, he was not enabled to make allusion to circumstances peculiar to certain readers or himself. The second case easily draws forth coincidences, but it also prevents them from being discovered. The circumstances to which allusion is perhaps made in these writings, are often, in reality, too obscure and too individual to enable us to detect them. It is right for us, then, to declare that, as regards certain epistles, the critical proofs are little striking, few, and not well known. Happily, however, in general, the proofs of sentiment and character of good faith, supply this want.

Among the epistles not contested, those of St. Paul have in their favor critical proofs of great strength. One singularly favorable circumstance carries this proof to its highest point. We have in the Acts the almost complete narration of the life of this apostle, at the period when these letters were written, and we have in these letters continual allusions to the same facts. Paul wrote always with great freedom; he speaks much to his disciples both concerning them and himself; he brings

* 2 John, i.; 3 John, i.

himself into view, recalls the past, and writes, without doubt, his history. Now there can be nothing better than these two kinds of parallel writings, in permitting us to judge of the authenticity and truth of both. They are, as two different biographies, in constant agreement, and the more that one of them is indirect, so much the more powerful are the confirmations which it brings to the support of the other, and so much more precious and pure is the light which it receives in return. The author of the letters evidently had no thought of writing his life, or of creating a resemblance with the book of the Acts; if he had thought thus, he would have necessarily taken an entirely different course. A book, known, without doubt, to nearly all my readers,* has developed this proof in a manner so clear and complete, that it would be impossible to make any addition. I shall, therefore, leave the subject, recommending the study of this book to those who may not be acquainted with its contents. They will not only find the development of the critical proof, which we have indicated, perfect, but numerous and important consequences, from the authenticity of the epistles, for the truth of christianity.

This agreement, so fortunate for the critical proof of the epistles of Paul, cannot benefit the rest, since the Acts do not give the history of Peter, of James,

* Paley's Horæ Paulinæ.

and of John, or of the period in which they wrote their epistles. And, moreover, they did not have the habit or occasion of introducing themselves to their readers so much as Paul. There is, however, another critical proof, almost as powerful, which will serve any of these four apostles; it is the evident distinction of style, method, and even of thought, proper to each, and their remarkable and different characters of originality. But as the development of this proof, is entirely confounded with that of the character of good faith impressed upon these writings, we shall undertake in the following chapter the simultaneous development of both.

CHAPTER SECOND.

CHARACTER AND GOOD FAITH OF THE WRITERS.

If there ever was a writing impressed with that simple and sincere coloring, which attracts confidence, and brings conviction; if ever there was a book which caused a reader, capable of reflecting, to say, "This language is that of a man convinced of the truth of his assertions"; it is surely the epistles of the apostles. The ideas and sentiments come immediately from the heart, without alteration, ornament or labor; and that heart, of which these writings give so plain a testimony, is always pure, humble, withdrawn from earthly things, and a stranger to imposture.

We will endeavor to add something more particular to these general remarks, and consecrate a few pages in searching, in these writings, for the traits by which the four principal authors are distinguished. I trust that the diversity of character we shall meet, the truth of the ideas, and their agreement with the history of the writers, will establish, upon a solid foundation, our conviction of their good faith, and obtain for us the proof for the authenticity of their works.

SECTION FIRST.

ST. PETER.

In the first part of this work we contemplated the character of Peter as a man and disciple; we wish now to consider him as a writer. This examination will be conducted only upon the first epistle, as being more considerable, characterisic, and undeniably authentic.

The most striking characteristic of the writing under examination, and which, at the very first, attracts the attention and touches the heart, is the transport of the apostle in announcing the redemption. His opening words* are those of thankfulness and joy. The idea of the salvation brought by Christ, the recollection of his promises, and his example, rule all his thoughts, govern all his lessons, and lead to his most particular precepts.† Am I deceived when I behold, in the manner which this writer employs in speaking of the redemption by the blood of Christ, the inquisitive but noble and elevated ardor which characterized the apostle Peter? We behold him, in the gospels, incessantly interrogating his master, impatient to comprehend his predictions and his lessons. In the epistle, we recognise the same apostle by the impetuous ardor

* Peter, i. 3. † 1 Peter, i. 2, 3—12, 13—15, 18—21, 23, 25; ii. 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 21—25, &c.

with which he describes the efforts of the prophets to penetrate the destinies of the Messiah.* There is, moreover, a deep sense of the price which the reconciliation of man hath cost, of the blood shed upon the cross,† of the danger of neglecting so great a safety, of the folly of disregarding the judgment of Him who shall judge without respect of persons.‡ His work is, also, essentially practical. Almost the entire epistle is consecrated to precepts and moral teachings. It is this very striking character, together with the perspicuity of his lessons, which most plainly distinguishes him from St. Paul. In general all is simple and positive; St. Peter does not dwell upon the mysteries of the faith; he has the appearance, at least, of being interested in ideas, results, and sentiments. Those which he brings forward are not always his own, he borrows a great number of phrases from James and Paul, and seems, indeed, more ready to speak from the abundance of an overflowing heart, than to explain dogmas and labor for new thoughts. If then he is so much employed concerning the redemption, it is not because he has meditated much upon the subject, but because his soul is interested; in other words, because he loves Jesus Christ. Here, then, we recognise St. Peter, the apostle who had lived with Jesus, and who loved, in him, not

* 1 Peter, i. 10—12. † 1 Peter, i. 2, 18, 19, 23; ii. 24, &c.
‡ 1 Peter, i. 15—17.

only the Saviour, but also the master and friend. In one of his epistles* he thus addresses his hearers: "Whom having not seen, ye love." He is astonished at this affection, which is not attached to the remembrance of a venerated image; he had lived with Jesus, and he perceived that the remembrance of his master, speaking, loving, reprimanding, pardoning, was the life of his soul and the support of his faith. If his remembrance had been taken away, he would have believed all to be lost; he therefore congratulates and admires those, who, never having seen, were yet able to believe and love. We find no such remark made by Paul. In another place Peter lays claim to regard, as having been the witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.† He places thus his hopes — his certainty of obtaining heaven — upon the circumstance of having personally seen Christ reviled, crucified, and raised from the dead. There is, if I am not deceived, an association of local opinions, a union of time and place, between his hopes and remembrances. He still beholds himself at the feet of Jesus, saying to him "Lord thou knowest that I love thee," and the Master answering, "Follow me."

This last word of Peter conducts us to a new characteristic trait of his writings. It is the liveliness of his hope, his contempt, or rather his insen-

* 1 Peter, i. 8. † 1 Peter, v. 1.

sibility to present sufferings. He exhorts his disciples to endurance; he expects to suffer himself, but without any appearance of discouragement; he is full of power and joy, and for this reason finds it no effort to endure.* He has the appearance of throwing a disdainful regard upon the terrors by which the adversaries of the cause of Christ undertake to stop his rejoicing. "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you."† Paul, likewise resigned, manifests his faith in an entirely different manner; he equally triumphs over suffering, but not without a contest, and if he is victorious, it is not forgotten. Nothing is able to separate him from the love of Christ,‡ but he has a thorn in his flesh, and he has need that the *power of Christ may rest upon him.*§ He seeks to throw off that burden of misery, of the weight of which Peter seems ignorant. In reading Paul, we seem, without doubt, to behold him enter the circus with a firm step, and his eyes directed to the heavens; but his features express an acquaintance with suffering, and the resigned lamentation of a martyr appears upon his lips. Peter, on the contrary, is pictured to our imagination, in his writings, as insensible to the afflictions of nature. We seem

* 1 Peter, i. 6, 7, 13; ii. 19, 20; iii. 14—18; iv. 12—19; v. 10.
† 1 Peter, v. 10. ‡ Romans, viii. 35. § 2 Cor. xii. 7—9.

to behold him nailed upon the cross, with a happy and pleasant aspect. A hymn of gratitude breaks from his lips; the executioners surround him without attracting his regard; the image of Christ brings joy to his heart. This diversity is owing, probably, to two causes, both valuable pledges of the authenticity of the epistles, and the veracity of the writers. The first is the difference of character. In that of Peter, there is much less reflection and much more impetuosity than in that of Paul, fewer ideas but more imagination; he is all action and motion, while the soul of St. Paul is full of meditation and thought. Paul receives a lasting impression of the same objects which Peter forgets, or does not perceive; of the same griefs, over which this last apostle passes without reflection.

The second cause, is the difference of position. Paul suffered during each hour of a long ministry. He contended, in detail, against the troubles to which the Jews, his constant enemies, were continually subjecting him. Peter does not appear, to have been thus ill used. He expected martyrdom and foresaw that it was the lot of his disciples. For a great and decisive sacrifice, an energetic mind assembles all its forces and meets the occasion; while another, is continually suffering during the whole of life. The martyrdom of Paul lasted twenty years. His sufferings moreover were real; those which Peter braved were yet in perspective.

The first contended and wearied himself with continual trials, the last made preparation for the future. He said, formerly, "I am ready to go with thee both into prison and to death."*

If now we collect together these different traits, our imagination will picture a character very natural, unique, and such as is well calculated to inspire confidence. We shall behold a man, ardent, sincere in speech, impetuous in action, full of sensibility and life, little habituated to reflection, but knowing how to love Jesus Christ, as probably the heart of man never before loved him. Is not this such a representation of the apostle Peter as the gospels have exhibited?

Many other traits in these writings, which have been neglected by us, would have increased the resemblance. But such as it is, this sketch appears to me very striking. I cannot read this epistle, without recognising the Peter of the gospels, modified without doubt by the spirit which he had received, and by the faith which had been more deeply rooted in his heart, but nevertheless the same Peter. Was there ever a character more removed from imposture and better adapted to inspire confidence? Where shall we look for sincerity if it is not here discovered, and under what better features can it be recognised?

This analysis will probably appear subtile to my

* Luke xxii. 33.

readers, but it appears to me so much the more true, the farther it is carried. It convinces me more than all testimony, of the authenticity of the epistle and the sincerity of its author.

SECTION SECOND.

ST. JAMES.

We will pass to the epistle of James and study the character of this apostle. Every practised reader will discover instantaneously in this epistle, greater marks of originality than even in that of Peter, and tokens not less remarkable of the sacred origin of the writing, and the perfect good faith of the writer.

At the first glance, we are struck with the multitude of precepts, expressed in general with concision and neatness, and arranged in order without preparation or correction. It seems as if the writer had wished to exclude every superfluous sentence and useless word. He is overflowing with sentiments and ideas. It is the same with St. Paul, and yet there is not a shade of resemblance between these two writers. The ideas of Paul, arising one from the other as he wrote, seem sometimes to embarrass each other, and, as it were, contend for the possession of the paper. From hence we have

an intricate style, numerous parentheses, and long periods of which we do not always easily distinguish the commencement or the end. The phrases of James on the contrary, neat and precise, follow each other generally with rapidity, and are arranged without transition or natural affinity as much as the sentences and articles of law. It is not a practiced writer we behold, but a clear head and an understanding heart. All alive to the importance of his precepts and the sacredness of the Christian calling, he remains however master of his impressions and words, and it is with a voice constantly dignified, calm and severe that he offers the oracles of the Holy Spirit. Peter, John, and even Paul, speak sometimes of their persons or ministry, but never James; he seems to regard himself only as the voice which cries in the desert, to publish there the holy lessons of christianity.

Another curious and decisive character of this epistle is the almost total absence of any thing like dogmatism. All is moral both as regards action and feeling. The apostle wishes to control sentiments as well as acts; it is in the depths of the human heart rather than in great deeds that his power consists. In fine the whole epistle is a collection of precepts: dogmatical lessons, considered as dogmas, occupy but little space. The redemption is not even indirectly called to mind. The name of Jesus Christ eight times repeated in the first chap-

ter of Peter alone, is not found but twice in the five chapters of James.* We cannot conclude from this, that he regarded the truths of the faith as of little importance, or that he did not recognise their influence. To prove the contrary, I need only his frequent allusions to the assistance of the Holy Spirit, and his recommendations of prayer.† He vigorously maintains that we should seek this assistance as the indispensable support of our feebleness, and the necessary condition of christian virtue. If then he speaks but little concerning doctrine, it is owing to the posititive and practical character by which he is evidently governed. Doctrine is the basis, but virtue is the edifice to be constructed, and James in particular, wishes to elevate certain virtues and attack hand to hand certain vices. It is to this result alone, that the apostle would consecrate his short and weighty sayings, so much he appears to fear, that if he held to principles, his readers would not make sufficiently vigorous and close applications, so much he seems resolved to employ as usefully as possible every word and argument. The epistle of James has an appearance of vigor and life when contrasted with that of Paul and John and even with that of Peter, although this last has also a very practical character.

Another marked character of our epistle is an

* James i. 1; ii. 1.
† James, i. 5—7, 17; iii. 15, 17; iv. 5, 6; viii. 15, 16—18.

intimate knowledge of the human heart, and, in general, a depth of view in seeking in man the secret causes of his actions and the sources of his afflictions.* This is peculiar to James; Peter and John are removed as far as possible from any such course. We observe, moreover, a marked predilection in our author for certain subjects, of the importance of which, the position or faults of his readers, his own experience and disposition have caused him to become acquainted. We have, for example the vanity of riches and splendor,† the importance of governing our speech, a subject which occupies nearly one third of his epistle,‡ patience under affliction and the salutary lessons to be drawn from them. But the subject which James treats with the greatest consideration is the importance of practical virtue and the danger of having faith independent of it. He makes sanctification, the essential and summary of the christian religion,‖ because in reality, without this consequence imperiously prescribed, religion fails in its design.

How remarkable is this tendency of the apostle, and with what a vivid and pure splendor does the thought of the Holy Spirit sparkle in this beautiful epistle!

James wrote in the first warmth of the new born

* James i. 14, 15, 20, 25, 26; iii. 2, 13, 16; iv. 1, 2, 4.
† James i. 9—11; ii. 1—7; iv. 13—16; v. 1, 6.
‡ James i. 19—26; iii.; v. 9—12.
‖ James i. 22—26, 27; ii. 8—11, 14—26.

christianity. He was one of the preachers of that religion which promises pardon to those who believe, who made faith the means and condition of safety. Commissioned to announce the good news to others, if he had been only an ordinary man, would he not have been inclined to exaggerate the value of faith of which he was the herald? In his enthusiasm would he not have permitted others to forget the importance of works? would he not have himself forgotten it? But he beheld faith under a right point of view, with its designs and tendency, he assumes the work of a christian in its sublime and complete development; and far from being an enthusiastic preacher, he exhibits himself as being more in reality, than a theologian, missionary or philosopher—an inspired apostle.

We cannot become wearied, in admiring the just and elevated views with which he reveals to us the true spirit of christianity. As we examine, one by one, the different sublime subjects to which he loves to return; the importance of works, a withdrawing from the earth of our hopes and affections, patience under afflictions, prayer, seeking the assistance of God, contrasting the thoughts and words, we shall perceive that they all tend to that point which he regards as the most efficacious and indispensable in true christianity. These are, in part, the objects, in which the incredulous philospher, the ordinary moralist and the superficial christian are but little

interested, and which perhaps they do not know how to understand; but the christian who has wrestled with success against the world and against his own heart, who has unceasingly sought to follow in the footsteps of Christ, and labored to become perfect as his heavenly Father, perceives their importance. He is continually brought to their consideration by his experience and meditations, he reads with astonishment the writing by an artizan of Nazareth.

I have, as yet, said nothing concerning the end of the third chapter,* of that truly divine portion, (*morceau*) so astonishing, both as regards place and time; it is, as it were, an eagle's glance thrown from the high heavens, over those religious dissensions and human passions, which, insinuating themselves under the masque of zeal, seldom fail of becoming blended with it. We behold here the true spirit of Jesus Christ, the spirit of succor, of gentleness, and of peace; a spirit which it would have been impossible for man, by his own exertions, to have advanced. Moreover, is it, at the commencement of Christianity, in the first fervor of the faith, and when, to propagate its doctrines, it is necessary to resist even to blood; is it then, that we ought to have expected that the effects of bitter zeal, would have been judged with such justice and dishonored by a preacher of the new doctrine, as changing

* James, iii. 13—18.

truth into falsehood? He is, indeed, a teacher of the newly risen sect struggling against persecutions and martyrdom; a fisherman become apostle, and speaking to the earth with the authority of God himself, in the midst of inspirations and miracles; it is he, who, in place of condemning resistance by anathemas, or punishing them by prodigies, marks, with a peaceable, mild, and gentle moderation, the wise character which he has received from on high.

We know but little concerning the history of the author of this epistle. James, *brother of the Lord*, is probably the same as James, the son of Alpheus; from the facts, however, which the primitive church has transmitted to us, and those which the epistle itself leads us to believe, the resemblance is striking, and we cannot but recognise a new token of truth.

The Acts* inform us, that in the council of the apostles, this same James united all opinions, by a moderate and conciliatory proposition, worthy of that mild wisdom which the epistle so vigorously advocates.

The first ecclesiastical writers have described to us James, the pastor of Jerusalem, as a holy man, entirely occupied with good works, continually having resource to prayer, surnamed the *Just*, and the *Defender of the People*, dear to the *Church*, and

* Acts, xv. 13—21.

venerated by the Jews themselves. Are not these different characters of his virtues in exact accordance with the beautiful traits of the epistle, such as we have indicated above. Surely, if the epistle of James fails in other critical proofs, those which we have just unfolded should suffice, and I cannot understand how a reflecting man can doubt its authenticity.

SECTION THIRD.

ST. JOHN.

We shall not enter here into a prolonged analysis. The style peculiar to this apostle is such, that one chapter alone is sufficient to attract our attention, and long details would be of little service. There are, indeed, some critical results, some curious resemblances, which it would be interesting to submit to an investigation, but they would occupy too much room, or be of a nature too scientific.

The epistles of John are not, as the others, isolated writings, to which we come seeking to discover the author, and to conjecture concerning his good or bad faith. They are attributed to the same writer as an authentic gospel, and are in accordance with that gospel. These resemblances are striking, incontestable, and decisive for the

authenticity of the epistles; but their indication would carry us too far, and delay the researches to which we are limited — the character of the writing and its author. The agreement of the principal of the three epistles with history, will be more in accordance with our plan.

Evangelical history has made us acquainted with John, as one full of tender devotion for his master, more nearly allied to him than any other by character and sympathy, and yet not wanting in vigor or courage; witness his presence at the cross of the Saviour, the surname *Son of Thunder*, and his wish, repressed by Jesus, to cause fire to descend from heaven upon the inhospitable Samaritans.* The ancient ecclesiastical narrations assure us, on their side, that John wrote in extreme old age at Ephesus, where he was pastor, and where he was much beloved; that charity formed the predominant feature of his character, and dictated all his words; that the aged dying apostle caused himself to be conveyed into the church, in order to repeat, with a trembling voice, these few words, "My little children, love one another." They tell us, moreover, that around him were many new sects in agitation, more pagan than christian, who gainsayed the precepts of the Saviour, denied his nature, and ridiculed his mission.

The form and ground-work of the epistle, respond

* Luke, ix. 51—56.

to these two classes of indications, with remarkable exactness.

The form gives the idea of a father speaking to his children; of an old man instructing freely, and without constraint, his younger friends. He has not sought any plan, or even any order; the same ideas frequently occur, for they are the result of a deep and habitual feeling, by which the author permits himself to be influenced without seeking to regulate the expression. *My little children*, says the apostle, and his familiar and benevolent tone is always in agreement with his words, so simple and so tender.

The ground-work is reduced, by degrees, to four precepts, which are continually brought back with conviction and zeal, and presented together, or by turns, as forming the essence and summary of religion, — faith in Christ, love of God, love of man, obedience. The writer here, as well as in the gospel, loves to contemplate the redemption as effected by Jesus Christ, and bring to the mind of his readers the divine nature of his master. Moreover, a very remarkable and essential character of this epistle is, that we do not find a single precept or a single lesson of practical morality with its accompanying details.

It is true that the apostle, with his attention directed to the great and necessary principles of all virtue, and having his heart entirely moved by

their holy influence, did not stop to descend to particulars and pursue the application. It pleased him, also, to invest his lessons with those brilliant but undecided figures, which the gospel of the same author presents in abundance. The words *life*, *light*, *union*, *grace*, *truth*, recur continually in those touching pages. They seem sometimes even borrowed from profane and rival doctrines, which the apostle wishes apparently to rectify, by making a more just application of the terms which they have abused. We cannot, indeed, but perceive, in this epistle, the more or less direct refutation of those adversaries,* concerning which history speaks to us; the severe invectives, now and then mingled with the tender expressions of charity, denote to us, also, the presence of those fearful corruptions of the faith. They reveal to us, also, the ancient vigor of this old man, nearly an hundred years old. Indeed, the apocalypse and the two small epistles reveal to us, yet more clearly, the *Boanerge*† of former times, in the mild apostle of Ephesus. We would remark, in conclusion, with regard to the teachings of the principal epistle, that the apostle supports them by his situation, as having been an

* Since the publication of the admirable work of Prof. Mather, it is no longer permitted us to doubt of the existence of the Gnostics at Ephesus; of the intention of the apostle to contend with their errors, or of the use which he has made of their language in order to accomplish his design.

† *The Son of Thunder*. Mark, iii. 17.

ocular witness of the life of the Saviour.* In truth, in relating this life, who could have announced, better than John, that which his eyes had seen and his hands had touched? I now conclude, and demand from those who have studied this epistle, if the character which it indicates of its author, is not that which history gives us; if it is not very distinct from the two preceding, and even in direct contrast with them; if it does not, in fine, inspire confidence, and permit us to see as with the eye, the sincerity of a pure, loving, and elevated soul?

SECTION FOURTH.

ST. PAUL.

We have arrived at the epistles of Paul.† The matter here is very copious, and our task difficult. To analyze these writings, so full of life, would require a volume, and a mind moreover, burning with the same zeal.

This apostle had been a persecutor, and all the energy of his ardent character had been directed against that religion, to the propagation of which he was now devoted. A singular contrast, which

* 1 John, i. 1—3.

† I have not comprehended, in this examination, the epistle to the Hebrews, as it has a character less marked, and its authenticity has been contested.

of itself is a demonstration of christianity.* This demonstration is foreign to our plan; it is only the apostle Paul whom we ought to study, in his writings. We shall not be able to comprehend in our examination, the agreement of the epistles with the historical character of the writer. The epistles are too numerous and long, and the resemblances too multiplied. Without undertaking, therefore, to consider the identity of the Paul of the Acts with the Paul of the epistles, we shall limit ourselves to the unfolding of those traits of beauty, sincerity, and originality, which are apparent in the latter. It appears to me impossible, when I make for myself this examination, that any one can do the same, without being filled with confidence, as to the authenticity of the epistles and the good faith of the apostle.

There are too many things to say upon this subject, and too many relations between them, to make it possible to follow in this examination a very methodical plan.

In order, however, that some regularity may be observed, I shall present successively the form of the lessons of the apostle, the characteristic tendency of his instructions, the moving principles of his apostleship and life, and the striking traits of his character.

* See the work of Lord Lyttleton upon the conversion of St. Paul.

The epistles of St. Paul differ much from the preceding in form and style. We have already pointed out the most striking contrasts. We have already spoken of the parentheses of Paul, of the accumulation of his ideas, the encroachment of his phrases upon each other, and the obscurity which is in consequence the result; but we have said nothing of the deep feeling, which causes this apparent disorder and produces so much life and interest. We are overwhelmed by the multitude and rapidity of ideas, and the power of his affections, but at the same time, there is an elevation, a purity and life, which ensures attention and touches the heart. In the heart of an uncultivated mountain, there is a secret fire which consumes and agitates the surface. Sometimes the volcano seems suppressed and the fire extinguished, but it is only restrained; shortly it rekindles, it raises the weight by which it was compressed and at last breaks forth, destroying every thing which attempts to resist. This appears to me to be an exact image of the style of St. Paul.* Every thing was evidently written without correction, we are not able to discover in the phrases either labor or artifice, and the arrangement of the words indicates rapidity of conception. Exclamations, comparisons, and a great variety of turns in the expression, animate

* See for example, 1 Corinthians iii. iv.; xii. 12; xiii. 13; xv. 29—34: 2 Corinthians xi. 12.

the writings and disclose the energetic feeling of inspiration. Dramatic forms often break the monotony of the instruction, and by their vivacity supply what is wanting in clearness of detail.* The writer places before us, those with whom he speaks, and recalls their history, but he also recalls his own history and readily surrenders himself to his own impressions. If he speaks also frequently of himself, it is not through vanity; no one who has read his writings can for a moment suspect this, but it is through openness of heart, through zeal and thorough affection.† The feeling which unites him to his disciples is so powerful, that the apostle cannot keep it concealed; he almost always writes under the inspiration of the joys or sorrows, which come to him from them; in vain does he try to suppress for a moment the frank expression; after a slight restraint he concludes by yielding himself entirely to his emotions. The early history of St. Paul forms moreover an essential element of his preaching, his trials and virtues were an argument and model of such importance to his disciples, and his life had been so strictly in agreement with his lessons, that under fear of leaving them incomplete the apostle thought it necessary to bring upon himself frequently the attention of his readers.‡

* Romans ii.; iii. 1, 5, 9, 27—31; iv. 1, 9; vi. 1—3; vii. 1, 7, 14—25; viii. 31—39; ix. 14—19, 30; xi. 1—15; Philippians iii. 13, 14; 1 Corinthians x. 22, 23.

† Epistle to the Philippians, *passim.*

‡ Galatians, i. 11; ii. 14.

Let us pass now to the principal tendencies of the instruction of Jesus. There are three peculiar to this apostle.

The first is the careful reunion of doctrinal teachings with precepts of virtue. Paul takes delight in establishing dogmas, and in unfolding and applying them. In order to cause them to be better appreciated, sometimes he has resource to the methods of the ancient fathers of the synagogue,* sometimes to the riches of an exalted imagination,† sometimes to the lessons of a powerful imagination and to the analogies of nature,‡ but more often to those of faith.§ He is not only an apostle, he is a theologian and divine. But he has too much zeal and places too much importance in the safety of the soul, not to urge the consequences of the religious theory which he loves to unfold. He preaches morality with the same warmth, the same perseverance, the same energy. He always regards doctrine as the cause of morality, and morality the consequence of doctrine; nor does he know how to separate them, so truly his great mind and great intelligence observe the whole tendency and character of christianity. He generally divides his epistles into two parts, the first consecrated to truth, the second to duty.‖ He unites the fruitful principles of John, to the severe

* Galatians iii. 15—18, 21—31. † 1 Corinthians iii. 9—15.
‡ 1 Corinthians xv. 33—50.
§ 1 Corinthians xv. 1—34; Romans viii. 12—21.
‖ Epistles to the Romans, Ephesians and Colossians.

and philosophical consequences of James; and the constant harmony of these two elements, is perhaps one of the most remarkable characteristics of his writings.*

A second general character of the precepts of Paul, is found in the extent and elevation of his religious views. Christianity is always to him the universal religion, destined to reconcile the entire human race with heaven. This thought has possession of his whole soul, it nourishes his zeal and leads him into action. The calling of the Gentiles is the subject to which he returns with the greatest pleasure, he has called it the *Mystery of Christ*, declares himself its especial apostle and rejoices in the thought that his sufferings will aid in its accomplishment.† I consider also, as a new proof of the elevated view under which Paul contemplates the religion of Christ, his continual care in reclaiming the essential and important, and distinguishing them from the external or accessory. This was greatly obscured by his cotemporaries with their foolish questions, their minute discussions, their gnostical genealogies, and their disputes concerning forbidden food. Paul will not suffer the law of Christ to be thus confounded. He feels the need of elevating the soul to something higher and no-

* Philippians ii. 3—7; iii. 10, 11, 18—21; Tit. ii. 11—15; iii. 1—8.

† 1 Timothy iii. 16; Romans i. 14; Galatians iii. 26—28; Ephesians ii. 11—22; iii.

bler and more christian. "The kingdom of heaven," he exclaims, "is not meat or drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."*

The last trait which appears to me to characterize the lessons of the apostle, is his profound feeling of the dignity of the sincere Christian, and the grandeur which Christ has restored to him. Even when he does not think of making these appear, his expressions and images, always show how deeply they have penetrated into his mind. Through the redemption, man has become a being endowed with all that is grand in sentiment, knowledge and destiny. "Ye are bought with a price," he writes to the Corinthians,† "be not ye the servants of men." If the heroes of Homer appear giants to his reader, man appears in the writings of St. Paul, as an immortal, dwelling yet upon the earth, but whose thoughts are in heaven. He bears the burden of this lower world; but he is not the less already raised up and sitting in the heavenly mansions with Jesus Christ.‡

We will now go farther, and endeavor to discover what passes in the heart of the apostle. We will seek in his writings the reigning sentiments, the foundation of all his affections and principal movers of all his ministry. These sentiments ap-

* Rom. xiv. 17, 18, 20. See also analogous lessons in Gal. vi. 15, 16; Col. ii. 17; Tit. iii. 8, 9.
† 1 Cor. vii. 23. ‡ Eph. ii. 6.

pear to me to be his love for Christ, his zeal for the faith, his affection for his disciples. It is for Christ that he labors, he loves him with all the power of his soul, but differently from Peter and John. They had seen him, he had not. His imagination therefore does not invest him with inseparable individual traits. He loves him as the Redeemer, the Lord of glory, calling his persecutor upon the journey to Damascus.

In the example of Jesus, Paul found support in doing the will of God. He is all zeal. The advancement of the kingdom of Christ is his first, his only concern. He does not lose sight of this great object for an instant; a prisoner, shipwrecked and even stoned, he yet finds means of preaching Christ, and turning his own sufferings to the safety of others. Provided that the end may be attained it is of little consequence what price is paid. His manly and noble soul, casts itself willingly into the midst of griefs. He takes pleasure in humiliations and outrages,* provided that he brings any to a knowledge of Jesus Christ.†

It is with difficulty that we distinguish from this sentiment, the affection Paul has for his disciples, so much he addresses himself to their soul and aspires to make them perfect, so much the

* 2 Cor. xii. 10.
† Rom. i. 8—16; 1 Cor. ix. 16—27; Col. iv. 3, 4; 2 Tim. ii. 9, 10.

apostle performs for all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ with a pure heart.* Yet this affection has also its peculiar coloring. After having admired the manly and vigorous zeal of the apostle, we experience a new charm in beholding this brave man, so sensible to everything which respects his disciples, and so easily moved by all their concerns. Their intercourse diverts him from the continual griefs to which his heart is subject, he reposes himself with confidence upon their love, a sweet joy arises at the spectacle of their progress, and each of their names awakens in him a remembrance or a hope. For them he experiences the griefs, the transports, and even the illusions with which the heart of a mother is, in general, alone acquainted.† "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing?" he writes to his faithful Thessalonians;‡ "are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." Love of his disciples, love for Christ, and zeal for his glory, are the three sentiments which mutually unite and fortify themselves in the soul of Paul, and make, as it were, its essence. Thus united and predominant, what sublimity and power they give to his whole life.

In order to accomplish this interesting analysis,

* Ephesians, vi. 24.
† Epistle to the Philippians; the salutations, Romans xvi., 1 Cor., xvi., &c.; Col. iv. &c.; 1 Thessalonians, ii. 8—13; iii.
‡ 1 Thessalonians, ii. 17—20.

we will now endeavor to observe yet closer the character of Paul, and certain striking characteristics which his writings indicate. They present the union of opposite extremes and continual contrasts, which are rarely joined in the same man, and which give to the manner of St. Paul so much attraction and originality. We will develop some of these, as it will be the best means of discovering all which his extraordinary and intelligent mind comprehended.

We have spoken of the frequent disorder of the phrases and ideas. Notwithstanding this disorder, however, we easily perceive that the head of the writer is entirely methodical and meditative. The whole of each epistle almost always indicates a plan, and often the subdivisions unfold a regular argument, constantly pursued through digressions and parentheses.

Paul is zealous for the truth. His courage is never in fault when it is necessary to combat error. If opposition is made to the lessons of faith ; if any one wanders from the apparent and shining pathway to which Christ calls the redeemed, or endeavors to corrupt Christianity by an alloy of a false philosophy, or the strict doctrines of Judaism, it is impossible for the apostle to remain silent. He will resist to his face even St. Peter,* and for a want of a better understanding of his nature, we

* Galatians ii. 11—14.

are liable then to regard him, as a man incapable of discretion on account of his zeal. But change the circumstances, and for those attacks by which the foundations of Christianity even were shaken, substitute differences of opinion upon subjects of less importance and of temporary interest, and Paul becomes another man. We behold in his nature only forbearance, protection, and regard for the conscience of others. "Let every one," he says, "be fully persuaded in his own mind. Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant?"*

If we knew Paul from this view only, we should believe that he had but little zeal for the truth, and that through excess of mildness he did not know how to devote himself to its defence. His powerful mind knew how to adapt itself to all occasions.

What a fearful energy there was in this man, when his orders were resisted or his laws were despised! What power in his reproaches, what impetuosity in his censures, what bitterness in his irony!† And moreover, who ever possessed such grace, or exhibited such a tender and delicate address of a loving and sensitive heart, as Paul does, when he speaks to men worthy of hearing,

* Romans xiv. 1, 4, 5; Philippians iv. 5.
† 1 Corinthians, iv. 8—13, 18—21; v. 3—5; ix. 1—7; xi. 17—22.

and when he does not wish to command. The epistle to Philemon is an example.

But a contrast yet more remarkable, because more striking, is that forgetfulness of himself, his wants and his rights, joined with such a delicate and lively susceptibility lest it should be forgotten that his heart is capable of so much devotion and love. There is also, a strong contrast between his complete renouncement of the earth, and the sorrowful impression produced by those sufferings which he does not, however, cease to brave. The examples are numerous.* The sufferings of the heart are singularly vivid with this man, who, however, at the same time, has no tie to bind him to the world.† "He uses the things of the world as not abusing them;"‡ he lives a doomed man, who has no longer upon the earth his home or country; after the example of his master, he bends in silence before outrage and blows, but if among these clamors of injustice he distinguishes a cherished voice, if one of those whom he has brought to Jesus Christ is joined to his accusers, his ardor is aroused, his heart bleeds, and full of grief he claims the affection of his children, or rather, he elevates his humbled head with pride, and exclaims, "From henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in

* 2 Timothy, i. 8, 12. Philippians, i. 20—24; ii 27, 28.
† Philippians, i. 12—18. 1 Corinthians, iv. 8—13, 14—17.
‡ 1 Corinthians, vii. 31.

my bonds the marks of the Lord Jesus.* We might greatly multiply these contrasts of the heart of the apostle, if I did not fear of creating weariness, by thus yielding myself to the course of details. What an influence such a man possesses over those whom he loves! Is it not easy to understand, why men, capable, at the same time, of feeling and meditating, find so great a charm in reading his epistles?

I had a desire, in order to complete this investigation, to exhibit Paul's character as displayed in times of action, by some fragments of his writings, and designed to analyze, for this end, the second epistle to the Corinthians, one of the most remarkable of St. Paul's, for its variety, its rapidity of movement, and the nobleness of its sentiments. But I fear lest I have already dwelt too long, and must, therefore, invite my readers to make this examination for themselves. I have purposely avoided drawing many examples from this beautiful epistle.

Are we not now able to perceive the proof which results, both for the authenticity of the writings, and for the good faith of the authors, from the agreement of these four characters. They are all varied, original, distinguished from each other by their manner of perceiving and presenting religion to their disciples, and yet, at the same time are perfectly

* Galatians, vi. 17.

united in design, in sentiment, and in hope. What stronger proof do we demand for the authenticity of their writings, than this original and decided diversity joined to so strong a union? What better guarantee can we have, for their entire sincerity, than that holiness of principle and life, that simplicity of speech, that forgetfulness of self, that language of the heart, that elevation of sentiment and desire, that ardent charity, which, notwithstanding their differences, so strongly characterize all?

As a critic and Christian, no study was ever more interesting to me, than that in which I am now engaged, or more strongly served to strengthen my faith in the holy messengers of Christ. In analyzing their writings, and in discovering at each page such sincere sentiments and holy virtues, it appears as if I had been peculiarly privileged to read these great souls, and closely admire such pure and devoted men. I seem to behold and hear them repeat the precepts of that Saviour whom they glorified by their life and death.

CHAPTER THIRD.

SPECIAL NATURE OF THE WRITINGS.

We cannot expect here to arrive at a complete examination. Minute details would take up too much room and carry us too far from our prescribed course. The preceding section moreover has in part accomplished the design of this. Our task will then be limited to a few words upon each of the apostolic writings, such as are necessary to enable the reader the better to understand the position and design of the writer. We will class them in separate groups according to their analogy.

I.—*Epistles relative to the Jewish Christians.*

In all these, Paul wrestled more or less against the tendency of these men, to restore the servitude and ceremonials of the Mosaic law; against the importance which they attached to the externals of religion; against the divisions which they introduced into the church; and finally against the resistance which they sometimes opposed to the authority of the apostle, pretending to rest in prefer-

ence upon that of James or Peter. Paul is the special preacher of the Gentiles, the defender of their right to the Christian faith, and consequently the forced adversary of the Jewish Christians, their attachment to the Mosaic law, and their stubbornness in endeavoring to make it a condition and means of safety. The apostle also vindicates the faith in Jesus Christ, the faith of the heart, the faith which purifies, improves and saves. He claims for himself the authority which belongs to him, and which some endeavored in vain to dispute. It is principally these epistles which have caused Paul to be regarded as the special apostle of justification by faith.

They carry, moreover, the proof of their authenticity even in their object. In what other period would the question of the pre-eminence of Mosaic ceremonialism have been discussed with such warmth?

The first of these epistles was that to the Galatians. It is addressed to a poor and ignorant people of Phrygia, of Gaulic origin, and whom Paul had twice visited. He learnt that in his absence the doctrines of the Jewish Christians had taken the place of the faith formerly preached by himself, and in the trouble of his soul he hastily wrote to them in order to recall them to the true gospel.*

* This epistle was written on Paul's third missionary tour to the churches of Asia Minor. His first mission took place about the year 45, A. D. He was sent by the elders of the church at

The epistles to the Corinthians follow. In order to understand it correctly, it is necessary to distinguish two parts and two designs, in conformity with the different views, by which Paul had been instructed in the wants and afflictions of the church. He had learned indirectly its discords and disorders, and in the first part is grieved and rebukes, but with hesitation as not being well assured upon the state of things. He had received from the Corinthians a direct message and various questions upon discipline; in the remainder of the epistle he answers them with considerable detail, not however without returning at times to his

Antioch, as a messenger to the Gentiles. On this mission he was accompanied by Barnabas, and visited Cyprus, Perga, Antioch in Pisidia, Lystra, Derbe and Attalia. Upon his return to Antioch he discovered that some Jewish Christians had arrived from Jerusalem and by the preaching of their doctrines had excited considerable disturbance. It was important therefore that the question in dispute between them should be definitely settled. Paul and Barnabas were accordingly sent to Jerusalem to lay the subject before the apostles. The elders and apostles decided that the Christian religion was a universal religion and that the observance of the ceremonial law was not necessary for salvation. This was an important decision, especially for Paul, who after this could bring forward the authority of the apostles to support his own preaching. The Jewish Christians, however, who thought differently continued their bitter opposition. Shortly afterwards, Paul, in company with Silas, undertook his second journey. (53 A. D.) They first visited the churches founded on Paul's first mission, and passed onward to Galatia and Troas, on the western coast of Africa. From thence they went to Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens and Corinth.

In the year 57, Paul commenced his *third* mission. He went first to Galatia and from thence to Ephesus, where he resided more than two years. It was at this time and from this place that the epistle to the Galatians was written. From Ephesus, Paul proceeded to Macedonia, Corinth, Philippi, Miletus and about the year 60, A. D., arrived at Jerusalem.

griefs, and raising himself at intervals with his ordinary vigor, to the great doctrines of faith by which he is constantly occupied. Chapter thirteenth is perhaps the most beautiful lesson of virtue, and chapter fifteenth the most remarkable doctrinal explanation, which can be found in the apostolic writings.

The epistle to the Romans was written afterwards. It is worthy of attention for its length, its method, its importance, its sublime lessons of piety, and its eloquent and practical teachings which the reader meets at every moment. It is addressed to a church divided into two parts, by the Jewish Christians. It humbles their arrogance in calling to mind the equality of all men before the compassions of God, and the efficacy, the superiority of the Christian faith designed by God himself to save the earth.

II.—*Epistle to the Hebrews.*

Although addressed to the Jewish Christians, this epistle cannot be united to the preceding, being distinguished from them by its design.

In the midst of the political fermentation, which was a prelude to the revolt of the Hebrews against the Romans and aroused their patriotism, the Christians of Palestine seemed sometimes to regret the worship of their fathers, and the pomp of the temple. Paul, or his secretary wrote to them, in

order to animate their zeal, extol their privileges, and recall to their mind the superiority of the faith of the Son of God over that ceremonial law, which had for its ministers only men and angels.

III.—*Epistles to the churches of Asia Minor.*

The ground is here changed and the design different. St. Paul unfolds his lessons in a manner less polemical, and brings before us the whole doctrine and morality of the revelation of Christ. He has nevertheless opponents in view, but he attacks them indirectly and by allusion. They are without the pale of the church, and if they threaten to corrupt it, they cannot inflict so great an injury as the Jewish Christians. These new opponents are the first Gnostics, the inheritors of the doctrines of the East, united to the platonist philosophy. They seek, like the apostle, to elevate man above the earth and direct his thoughts to God, but they do not understand the maladies of the heart which they wish to cure, they remove the Word of Christ and nourish vain chimeras. The apostle contends with them in an indirect manner; he borrows sometimes their expressions in order to bring them to a more exact meaning, as St. John has done in his gospel.

The group includes the epistle to the Ephesians and that to the Colossians. Paul wrote them in prison at Rome and sent them by the same ship.

They are almost identical in their plan, their design, their argument, and sometimes even in their phrases. But the first is the more extended; it is also more general, being a circular addressed to several churches of Asia Minor. The other on the contrary was sent directly to the church of the Colossians and is of a more particular character.

IV.—*Epistles to the well beloved Churches.*

I venture to place under this head the epistles to the Thessalonians and Philippians, churches remarkable for the confidence and affection which St. Paul bears towards them and for the joy which they inspire. In these epistles he does not censure; he encourages and warns, his heart is opened by confidence and he is all tenderness. Happy Macedonia, whose churches merit such eulogiums and were the objects of such love. We cannot discover here any certain traces of Jewish Christians or Gnostics.

The epistles to the Thessalonians were written before all the other epistles of St. Paul, The first was designed to strengthen the rising church in the midst of the storms excited by the rage of the Jews. Paul who had laid the foundation was not able to abide near it only three weeks: he is grieved at beholding his new converts already exposed to persecution, but his heart is moved with joy at beholding them firm and faithful. The second epistle,

shorter and more obscure, was written a little while after, for the purpose of correcting a mistake,* the cause of which we are unable to determine. The second chapter has never yet been satisfactorily explained. Nor will we be surprised at this if we consider that the apostle refers his readers to explanations given orally.† Upon being understood by those to whom he addresses himself, he appears to have some motive in not expressing himself more clearly.

The epistle to the Philippians was written ten years after, in the prison of Nero. It is an effusion full of the tenderness and confidence of a father writing to his beloved children, whose love he has proved, whose gifts he has received, and to whom he wishes to give counsel. He writes with too great an intimacy and freedom to seek a plan. But in return, what useful and sublime lessons do we receive from the mouth of the apostle.‡

V.—*Epistles to the Bishops of the Church.*

The nature of the subject calls the same apostle to new precepts, and gives to those epistles a particular interest. All three appear to have been written at a late period and after the book of the Acts was completed. The exact time is not easy to determine. They make allusion to the presence

* 2 Thess. ii. 2. † 2 Thess. ii. 5, 6.
‡ See, in particular, chapters ii. iii.

of the Gnostics and the dangers by which the church is menaced. The epistle of Titus and the first to Timothy appear to have been written at the same epoch on account of the close resemblance. The second to Timothy, is written as it were, at the entrance of the bloody arena where Paul narrowly escaped immolation. It terminates by a cry of deliverance from the martyr apostle* at the sight of the crown of justice. We can unite to these three epistles the introduction of the apocalypse† which addresses such solemn lessons to the bishops of Asia. The whole ought to be the manual of the minister of Jesus Christ.

VI.—*Particular Epistles written to Individuals.*

The epistle to Philemon and the second and third of John, were not addressed to the church. They are indebted to the useful lessons they unfold and to the known inspiration of their authors for their insertion into the canon. They all truly display to us their authority; that to Philemon will be an eternal witness of the mildness, charity and tenderness of St. Paul.‡

* 2 Tim. iv. 6—8. † Apoc. i. iii.

‡ "This delightful little epistle," says Olshausen. "so clearly exhibits all the characteristics of the great apostle, and is so utterly free from every thing which would make it probable that any person could have a motive in forging it, that no one would ever entertain the idea of denying that Paul was its author. Philemon, to whom the epistle is addressed, probably lived in Colosse, for that Archippus, who held an office in the church at

VII.—*The Catholic Epistles.*

This title, even, is somewhat obscure, and we are not certain of the meaning given to it by the first collectors of the canon. It is generally believed that it served to characterize the destination of the epistles of James, Peter, Jude and John, addressed as they were, to whole regions or the universal church, while those of Paul were sent to a single church.

What we have already said concerning the most remarkable of the writings leaves little to be added.

The epistle of James is addressed from Jerusalem to the *twelve scattered tribes*,* that is to say, to the Jews who have become Christians dispersed throughout Asia, and whose rallying point was Jerusalem. His frequent allusions to passages of St. Paul, to his doctrines and his arguments, give us reason to believe that James had some design of

Colosse appears here as his son, and Appia, as his wife. (Phil. v. 2.) Paul wrote this epistle, likewise in confinement (v. 13,) and sends salutations from all those who, according to the Acts and the epistle to the Colossians, were in his vicinity, (v. 23, 24.) Onesimus, who had fled from the relation of bondage which he had sustained towards Philemon in Colosse, Paul sends back to his master, whom he informs that his slave had been led by him to obey the gospel; so that Philemon is to receive back again as a brother, him whom he had lost as a slave. The whole of this small epistle comprises, indeed, no important doctrinal contents; but it is an exhibition of interior, deep feeling, and delicate regard to circumstances on the part of the apostle, and as such has always been very dear and valuable to the church. (Fosdick's Translation.)

* James i. 1.

rendering them more clear and preventing their abuse. James placed too much importance in sanctification and works, to permit, against these doctrines, the abuse of a too absolute or partial interpretation of any passages of St. Paul.

The first epistle of Peter is addressed from Babylon to the Jews, who had become Christians, dispersed throughout Asia Minor. The apostle appears to have written to them after the burning of Rome, in the height of the persecution which followed, and when he was fearful for their safety. It is against these that he had previously labored to strengthen them. This epistle contains allusions and even quotations from those of Paul and James.

As to the second of Peter, it appears to be addressed to the same men, but the place, the time and the design are uncertain. What is more remarkable, it is in singular agreement with the epistle of Jude which it has imitated or rather developed.* Both of these epistles contend against the deceitful teachers, probably more or less Gnostical, who endeavored to corrupt christianity.

The epistle of Jude is not much clearer than the second of Peter, of which it is, as it were, the counter part. But it is shorter, and the study of the internal character of both places its authenticity beyond doubt. Moreover, notwithstanding its extreme brevity, it has been quoted by numerous

* 2 Peter ii.

learned men among the church. It contains striking passages,* and has in the favor of its authenticity, many more internal and external proofs, than we ought to expect fo ra letter so brief.

VIII.—*Apocalypse of John.*

This prophetic writing will detain us but a short time. Its obscurity sometimes recalls the second chapter of the second epistle to the Thessalonians, and is partly owing to the same causes. Its contents alone, have given rise to questions concerning its authenticity, as is proved by the origin and history of doubts. In making an examination, we are convinced that this writing has in its favor numerous historical testimonies and internal evidences. It is evidently designed to elevate the courage of Christians, broken down by persecution, and to promise a final triumph to the afflicted Church. Chapters second and third furnish as useful lessons as any other part of the New Testament; and the remainder, though less clear, is far from being deprived of instructive lessons. In the midst of the solemn and fearful obscurities of this mysterious book; among the animated and numerous imitations of the prophets of the ancient faith, the faithful, capable of perceiving, and resigned to

* See in particular, verses 20 and 21, a complete and concise summary of the Christian life.

their not being able to comprehend the whole, have found enough to nourish their piety and quicken their hopes. Is it possible to forget the grandeur, the beauty, the purity of some figures, under which this book represents to us the happiness of heaven, and the celestial world of spirits?

PART THIRD.

PROPOSITIONS RELATIVE
TO THE
ENTIRE CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

PART THIRD.

PROPOSITIONS RELATIVE TO THE ENTIRE CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

After having examined separately the Gospels and the Epistles, it will be necessary now to give explanations and proofs relative to the whole. But the design and the limits of this small treatise, will not permit me to stop long at this task. I can only copy or abridge several good works, with which my readers ought to be acquainted.

I shall limit myself, in this third part, as in the two preceding, to certain indications or known bonds of union, which I shall attempt to render clear and useful. These will have a bearing rather upon the books themselves, than upon their doctrines.

I propose, then:

1. To unfold some tokens of the divinity of the New Testament, drawn from the nature and design of the book.

2. To lay down some of the principal criticisms of interpretation, designed to prevent doubts rather than to combat objections. If the application of these principles is able to remove the obscurity and uncertainty of which some of the readers of the New Testament greatly complain, I shall as well have served the cause of this book, as if I had defended it against more methodical and learned attacks.

CHAPTER FIRST.

DIRECT PROOF.

SECTION FIRST.

NATURE OF THE BOOK DRAWN FROM THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF ITS ORIGIN.

The book which we are examining, is the fruit of a religious revolution. It had its birth in the midst of a violent crisis, when all minds were deeply agitated; it endeavored to effect a complete and sudden change in the ideas and sentiments of the age. It had its origin, moreover, among a people having but little learning or experience, and its authors belonged, in general, to this class. This book, consequently, ought to carry a deep impression of this state of affairs. And surely a reader but little skilled in such matters, will perceive, without difficulty, a faithful image of the opinions, agitations, and views of the society, in the bosom of which it was written. Its origin was encompassed by all those circumstances most fit to raise the ideas and sentiments above their common sphere, and place them beyond the line of truth and good sense. Persecution surrounded the authors of this work, and martyrdom was continually presented to their view. They believed that the end of the world was near at hand, they abandoned to the poor their

goods, and changed not only their religion, but their profession, habits, and country. They had, for the most part, received no education, and had none of that experience of the world which would have aided them in judging of their new position. They believed, moreover, that they had the power of working miracles, and beheld them frequently performed in the name, and by the authority of that Christ, whom they declared that they were commissioned to announce. They were convinced of the possession of divine inspiration, and that God spoke by their mouth and that of others. Some wish to suppose that they were, in part, or altogether, imposters — a supposition, nevertheless, the most absurd of all; no one can deny, at least, that the Christian society of which they were the members, did not believe in a divine inspiration imparted to a great number of its members, and often communicated to new prophets, and that it was not met with, in perfection, under the circumstances just related. This fact is sufficient, and I would ask all enlightened men the following question: In the natural order of things what ought to be the spirit of a book, written by different members of a society in the epoch of its most violent fermentation? What idea would it give us of its authors, and of the sect which brought it into existence? Every learned man, who, without having read the New Testament, is acquainted with history and the

human heart, would instantly answer, "This book will surely give the idea of a society in the utmost confusion, or perhaps may mingle some beautiful sentiments with ridiculous precepts, grotesque actions and public madness. We shall see, probably, a skilful imposition, bearing, nevertheless, the impressions of fanaticism, in order to disguise the fraud. We shall, moreover, behold ridiculous boastings, and gigantic projects without results. In this society, we shall undoubtedly behold men out of their senses, women and children in extacies, admiring a host of unintelligible prophecies, and performing the most extraordinary, foolish, and wicked actions. In connexion with acts of devotion and virtue, we shall not fail of observing selfish frauds and unlicensed disorder, under the mask of inspiration and charity.

In one word, this society, its leaders and its books, will give to us exactly such a spectacle as all religious societies, similarly placed, have presented."

Now let any one open the New Testament, and study the book of the Acts, in order to judge of the state of society, and the epistles in order to judge of the writers, let him compare his expectations, with what he finds, and then if he can, reveal this enigma, by any other word than *Inspiration*;—the inspiration of the men and consequently of the books.

The four distinguishing traits which have been sketched in the second part of this book, relieve me from the necessity of developing this assertion, as respects the epistles. The book of the Acts, also, is not less remarkable for the picture which it furnishes of the first Christian society. These men, whose head and heart would have been troubled, agitated, and exalted almost to madness, if they had been common persons, are models of wisdom, calmness and moderation. They believed, it is true, that they were inspired to work miracles, but it has never been proved that they were wrong in thus believing. They believed that they were inspired, but at the same time they declared in their discourses that faith is nothing without charity, and that this is even preferable. These men, so devoted and desirous of another life, are, on the other hand, full of patience and judgment. They do not hesitate, at the first call, to leap into the arena of martyrdom, but at the same time they know how to watch prudently over a life, which can yet be useful to their brothers. I entreat my reader to examine the twentyseventh chapter of the Acts, and then to ask himself whether he finds the wisdom, presence of mind and good sense with the sailors or St. Paul?

SECTION SECOND.

DESTINY OF THE BOOK.

In the midst of a religious crisis some ignorant peasants to whom are joined, it is true, two men, endowed with an incomplete and badly directed education, undertake to make several books. Some of their number relate those things which they have beheld, and the others write that which they had formerly preached. This work is made without agreement and without concert. Their narrations and epistles have no plan. They die, and others take the pains of collecting these writings, even those the most scattered, forming a work the least methodical and labored, perhaps, which has ever existed. This book is the New Testament.

Now, according to all human probability, what will be the destiny of this book?

If by some remarkable accident it has obtained success, it will be without doubt partial and momentary, resulting from curiosity and fanaticism. At least in a short time the book will be neglected, and coming ages bringing new knowledge and ideas will bury it in eternal oblivion, or it will remain as one of those literary curiosities which obtain almost all their value from their singularity and uselessness.

How different is the reality. The book lives

and occupies the first rank even in the midst of a developing and progressive civilization. While the works of the greatest geniuses have become obsolete, are regarded as more curious than useful, or are known only to learned men, this book is in the hands of the whole world, it is found alike with the monarch, the peasant, the old, the young, the learned and the ignorant. An immense number of sincere and enlightened persons read it not only once or twice, as they would any other work, but every day and throughout their whole life; they affirm that they feel at each reading a greater interest, and discover new ideas and more sublime beauties.

This is not an affair of fanaticism or party; parties and fanaticism do not exist for eighteen hundred years. Sometimes the world has neglected this book, but never without repentance, and sooner or later returning to it with yet more eagerness and profit. It has also been attacked with much animosity by men who undertook to diminish its glory and stay its success. They have by turns employed ridicule and argument, science and frivolity, and have raised in its opposition the most powerful and contagious passions. They have pronounced their blasphemy amid the shoutings of a crowd of enthusiasts, which have been repeated by a delirious multitude. But this triumph lasted only for a day. These bold adversaries are dead and the book

lives. Modern ages, however, witnesses and judges of these contentions, are, in reality, judges of books the most noble and most difficult which have ever been beheld. Wo to the writer who without style and method, undertakes to find a public and readers. The New Testament has neither method nor style, and yet it reigns with more power over our age than over preceding generations. In one word, at the end of eighteen hundred years this book is as applicable, as important, and as respected as in the first ages of the church. It is even more so, because being contemplated from a greater distance and by more enlightened spectators, its unity and characteristic features are more readily seized. Its cotemporaries have termed it an inspired book; since then sixty generations have passed away and the civilized world bestows upon it the same name. Profound and impartial thinkers declare that of all existing books it is that which contains the most useful truths and the true philosophy. I do not know, for my own part, how to explain this phenomenon only by divine inspiration, and this proof alone is able to satisfy me. If I had nothing else to rely upon in favor of this great doctrine, the miracles, the predictions, the rapid success of the religion, the character of Christ, that of the apostles, and their declarations and martyrdom, this fact of the destiny of the book, with its moral and intellectual excellence in conjunction with the incapacity

of its authors would alone convince me. I know by whom this book has been made, I know also what the Jews were able to accomplish at this epoch; I study this book and I behold it in agreement with the wants of our learned and skilful age, I perceive it at the head of civilization, still serving as a guide to the human race. I see that instead of tending to bring me back to those ages of ignorance in which it was written, it urges me onward towards an indefinite progress in knowledge, virtue and philanthropy. I behold it finally, not Jewish, as its authors, but universal, eternal, celestial. My conviction is hence absolute, and I name it with respect, the WORD OF GOD.

One other analogous fact impresses still more strongly this conviction. This book is not only the most extraordinary in its nature and its success, it is also that which has diffused the greatest number of benefits over the earth. For eighteen hundred years wherever it has been carried, that is to say, into the bosom of almost every civilized society, it has comforted the afflicted, opened the heart to hope, prevented misfortunes and crimes, and given birth to numerous virtues. In dungeons and palaces, cities and deserts, in the abodes of innocence and the asylums of repentance, it alike consoles and sanctifies; in the hours of danger and death all those who have been faithful prove its power, and their grief is changed to joy. We have seen the

sailor about to sink into the depths of the ocean, the traveller expiring on the sands of the desert, and the soldier called to immolate himself for his country, in recalling some lines to their remembrance, meet their end with serenity and hope. The balm of all wounds, it wipes away all tears, subdues temptation and when any good work is to be performed, is present to promise and act. It is moreover, upon the poor, the humble, the oppressed, and the miserable, that it sheds its benefits. It is the first book which is principally and decidedly engaged in their interests. The master has declared this and has made it a striking characteristic of his new religion. "Go and show these things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." Before insulting this book, let the incredulous and rationalist declare what benefits of a like nature, have been the result of their writings or doctrines. If they have a heart to feel, before publishing their doubts, their sophisms or their subtilties let them remember the consolations, the virtues, and the hopes which have been scattered by this book, for many ages, over millions of unfortunate beings whom the world has abandoned; and then let them blush that they have arisen not to bless but to curse, and have, as it were, constituted themselves

the representatives of all the ingratitude of the human family.

Society is not under less obligation to this book than individuals. It has preached to man, peace, equality of laws, respect for mankind, brotherly love, zeal for the general good. It has introduced those truths which sooner or later grow and yield fruit, and those movements of public spirit and humanity which have excited humble, private individuals, to devote their lives, in diminishing the sufferings of the great family of man.

There is no abuse in human society which this book has not condemned, by its spirit. There is no real amelioration which it has not called forth by its tendencies and effects. It has been the most powerful and holy source, of that enlarged and beautiful social philosophy, which respects in man, that which he has a right to be, and can become, and which claims for all, the greatest possible knowledge and happiness. Religion, it is true, has been accused of great evils, but we all know, that the gospel, instead of being an accomplice, labors to prevent them. It is only when it has been forgotten or neglected, that religion has wandered.

And can this remarkable book be the work of simple Galilean mountaineers, when Socrates or Plato never produced or dreamed of such truths? Indeed in order to be satisfied with such a solution, it is necessary to become, I do not say very skepti-

cal, but on the contrary very credulous. What an idea does this give us of the good sense of the human family, when man can believe that such poor instruments have exercised such an influence.

SECTION THIRD.

TRIUMPHS OF THE BOOK.

I HAVE in view two different periods when this book has obtained remarkable victories, notwithstanding the energy of opposition or improbability of success.

The first is that of the reformation. A period when ignorance was universal, religion perverted and this book forgotten. As soon as a return of knowledge caused it to be restudied, this circumstance, alone, produced a revolution, which changed the face of the Christian world. Multiplied powers and interests resisted and endeavored to restrain the torrent. The power of priests, the interest of despotism, the terror of innovations, the superstition of the multitude, and inveterate habits, protected at once by ignorance, violence and passion, were the obstacles to be surmounted. But the book was more powerful than all. It was known and placed upon its throne.

Since the establishment of christianity, never had a like revolution of opinions taken place. The triumph under consideration was obtained in an age of ignorance. There is another, less brilliant, without doubt, but yet worthy of attention, which has been obtained in our days over an incredulous age. Both of these events are due to the same cause — a book. From whence comes this great power?

I do not wish to speak of the holy movements which deeply agitated the religious community, and brought it indeed to the foot of the cross. It is one of the incidents of this regeneration alone, which I wish to call to mind, and that which most nearly relates to this very book. I mean the success of biblical societies. This is not indeed precisely a victory or a miracle, it is not even a proof; but it is an event which supposes a particular operation of Providence and seems to indicate a visible blessing upon the book of his choice.

It is now eighteen years, since a few religious friends who had accidentally met together, resolved upon the project of sending some Bibles to a poor country. This idea was executed, extended, and the Bible society founded. Feeble at its commencement, silent in its progress, this obscure association found itself, ere it was aware, active, influential and powerful. Its steps from the beginning were surrounded by obstacles. At the first rumor of its

existence a thousand voices cried in unison, that the enterprise was useless, extravagant and absurd; these general objections, however, died away before the record of its transactions. Some resisted the new society, indirectly, by a silent repugnance, and directly by open attacks. The incredulous regarded it with pity, the crowd of Christians could not appreciate its greatness, and the leaders of the church feared its invading march and the false views of many of its friends. It pursued its way, however, enlarging at every step like the shadow cast by the setting sun. Wherever it was introduced, without external force, and without any other power than its book, the same obstacles were presented, over which it triumphed with the same success. The right, and even the false views of some of its defenders, were not able to injure it. In less than ten years its cause was gained; it extended its arms over two worlds, uniting Europe to India, and Lapland to Otaheite. Its revenues are those of an empire, and its pacific armies have overrun Christian Europe, and are still on the march.

This success is, certainly, such as no one would have expected, not even the founders of the society, much less its enemies. We would ask the ingenious men of the age to unriddle this enigma.

According to our belief, the solution is to be found, as in the times of the reformation, in the

book and in Providence ; in the great power of this book to which the world has given its faith, and in the will of God to preserve and bless it.

The Biblical Society has drawn its power from one principle alone — that of not adding to the Bible one word of human explanation, but leaving the book to perform its work unaided. This principle unites the association to the book alone. It is isolated from human passions, in order that it may be supported upon Christ and his book. From hence it results, that the strength of the association is no other than that of the holy book, and that it is necessary to attribute to this the triumphs of that. This principle has not yet produced all its fruits. It has not even been generally understood. Its consequences seem often as difficult to be foreseen by the defenders as by the enemies of the biblical cause. I have the hope that at some future day they will be displayed over the whole face of the Christian world ; for this principle is not of those which tarry in their progress, and there is no sectarian barrier which it ought not necessarily to break. But we will leave the future to Providence, and content ourselves in admiring what it has accomplished before our eyes.

Often forgotten, sometimes misconstrued, this principle has not less efficaciously and constantly labored, in bringing into brotherly union those men, who, without this aid, would have been engaged in

a vindictive war. It has placed in agreement believers of all countries and all communions, and has united them in the same action, (I had almost said sanctuary,) astonished and excited in finding themselves aiding instead of contending with each other. From hence victory must come. In this principle is the necessary pledge and real instrument of success. The only obstacles a little formidable which the biblical society has encountered, the only real checks it has experienced, the only dangers which yet threaten it, are real or presumed blows given to the principle from which it draws its grandeur and its life. The members of the society are only men, but the principle and the book are divine. From hence a new consequence is derived. With the inevitable imperfections of those, who extended the bible societies to a great distance, and the lukewarmness and incredulity of the people with whom they were founded, it is necessary, in order to explain such a rapid and wonderful success, to attribute it to something more than the divinity of the principle and the book. We can attribute it only to the special intervention of Providence, by whom it has been given to man as the depository of the means of salvation. Without this intervention, the problem cannot be entirely solved. In an undertaking so beautiful and holy, and which thirty years since seemed so strange, the Christian cannot but behold the divine operation, the indif-

ferent cannot prevent himself from being amazed, and the incredulous ought at least to be astonished in beholding human probabilities thus confounded.

The considerations developed in this chapter, are not, I acknowledge, rigorous demonstrations. But is he a sensible or impartial man who can forget the force of such circumstances? Is he worthy of the name of a philosopher, who is determined to see nothing but what is accidental, and of human contrivance, in the origin, spirit, destiny, and triumphs of the New Testament?

CHAPTER SECOND.

THE REMOVAL OF DOUBTS AND OBSCURITIES.

Among those who read the Bible, nothing is more common than false ideas upon its true nature, causing doubts and obscurities which even sincere and convinced Christians lament.

We will endeavor to discover the origin of these sad errors. I think that they arise from three sources:

1. A misunderstanding of the nature of the inspiration of the sacred writers.

2. A misunderstanding of the nature of their language.

3. A misunderstanding of the nature of their lessons.

If, in the development of these three causes, I am led into some details a little foreign to the precise subject of this chapter, I hope, at least, they will not be irrelevant to its ultimate design. I propose to place my readers in a situation to read the Bible with profit, and interpret it with wisdom. Indulgence will, therefore, I hope be extended to those digressions which tend to this result.

SECTION FIRST.

ERRORS UPON THE NATURE OF THE INSPIRATION OF THE SACRED WRITINGS.

We have here one of the most common sources of those confused objections, which arise in the mind of religious readers, and which, suppressed rather than resolved, often return to trouble their piety, and strike with barrenness their studies. When, in reading the Bible, a singular image, an obscure phrase, a careless expression, the least historical contradiction, or such other trace of humanity is observed, the reader, who, under the title of "The Word of God," seeks in the text lessons addressed from God to him, without any marks of human agency, is astonished and grieved, and begins, it may be, to doubt; but wherefore? only because he expects from divine inspiration what he ought not to expect, and what, very wisely, did not enter into the views of God. I refer my readers to what I have formerly said upon the same subject, and with the same design, in a former volume.* Without entering, in this place, into the same details, I will, however recall the principles and apply them to the New Testament.

Inspiration enlightened, directed, and improved holy men, but it did not transform them. It refined

* De l'origine authentique et divine de l'Ancien Testament, p. 239—259.

and enlarged their minds; it purified, and, so to speak, consecrated that intelligence which became the depository of divine thought, but it left it active and capable of advancing onward towards perfection. Inspiration revealed to them many new things in the sacred writings, but it did not reveal to them all possible truths. It placed them in possession of doctrines, but it left them to instruct themselves in facts. It preserved the historians from error, but, although aided by it, they do not relate only that which they had seen and heard, but that of which they had been informed. There are those who tell us this, and the first Christians confirm it. Notwithstanding inspiration, the apostles preserve a distinct character, and have particular powers and opinions. We behold them in the Acts, doubting, deliberating, acquiring information, and, upon certain subjects, remaining in uncertainty or ignorance.

The evangelists preserve their individuality. Although inspired, they relate, each according to his own manner, as they have understood and remembered, with some diversity in the order and detail. There is also a pledge of their good faith, a character of naturalness, which, without that, would have been wanting. Their narrations are different, but the ground-work, the lessons, the results are the same, are true, and, in so being, make manifest their inspiration.

The authors of the epistles equally preserve their

individuality. Certainly Peter and Paul, James and John, heirs of the same doctrine, were not affected in the same manner, and did not thus communicate their impressions. They were inspired, but they remained men. It is this which ever gives to their character such touching and varied developments. Had they become inspired machines, all this would have disappeared. They preserved, then, an intelligence, at the same time active and circumscribed; they could be ignorant of the period of the last judgment, so as to possess false ideas as to the probable nearness of this great event, and have, moreover, received from the Holy Spirit the certainty of its future reality. In their style, in their narrations, and even in their arguments, they carry some impress of their character, their education, and their former opinions. It is here we discover one of the ordinary causes of the faults of manner, language, or perspicuity, of which we hear so much complaint, and through which the divinity of their book is manifested with so much the more splendor, for him who knows how to see and think. And have they not themselves said, that this is the treasure which they carry in earthen vessels.* Instead of denying, therefore, the celestial origin of the holy word, because it tells us in human language of divine things, let us observe the operation of the Holy Spirit, in

* 2 Corinthians, iv. 7.

the imperfection even of the instruments which it has chosen.

In the second place, the God of revelation makes, in the expressions, the images, and even the reasonings of the revealed books, necessary concessions to the limits of human intelligence. God speaking to man must, in order to be understood, assume the manner of a father speaking to his son, a master to his scholar, or an orator to the multitude. Truth lies not in the words but in the ideas, and it is the ideas which are necessary to be understood, seized, and retained. But it is not a philosophical or rigorous language, which could have obtained this end with the Corinthians, the Colossians, the Hebrews, or mankind in general. There was an absolute necessity for a language and train of reasoning, in agreement with their intelligence, without which, revelation would have failed in its purpose. When Jesus Christ announced, that "Many would come from the east and the west, and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven,"* and when he recommends to cut off an arm or pluck out an eye, because "it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell,"† in this vivid, intelligible, but plain language, he makes concessions and accommodations of this nature. If, then, the

* Matthew, viii. 11. † Ibid, v. 29, 30.

apostles employ figures common at that remote period, and arguments convincing to his contemporaries, but less conclusive for our minds, they do the same, and instead of being astonished, we ought to recognise the necessary progress of divine wisdom acting upon human intelligence. We ought to distinguish the matter from the form, the ideas from the plan, the perfect thought from the imperfect expression, and then we shall believe instead of doubting.

In the third place, the books of the New Testament — destined to sanctify the whole human race — were, however, more particularly addressed to certain churches or to certain individuals. They were written a long time after the foundation of the church, successively, and in times of need; sometimes to answer questions, sometimes to contest an error, sometimes to strengthen a disheartened church, and always for some particular design.

Without doubt they do not the less contain the whole faith; undoubtedly the Holy Spirit designed them, at the same time, for all the disciples of Christ, in all places, and in all ages. But these remote disciples and future churches, have no right in being astonished or lamenting, if the things taught are those especially adapted to the wants of their ancestors. The Christians of Corinth and Thessalonica have received, it is true, more especial directions than ourselves, but our lot is yet

sufficiently favorable, and perhaps better, for we possess the instructions given to them, to others, to all; we possess the whole. We should not be astonished, for instance, that Paul dwells so much upon the dangerous or lawful custom of sacrificing animals to idols, or upon the propriety of having the head covered or uncovered in the temple. There is no cause here of doubting, or of being surprised even; they are circumstances useless to us, it is true; but Paul wrote them to the Corinthians and not to us. This must not be forgotten, and then these same details, which seem so superfluous when we think of them in connection with ourselves, read under this new point of view, will resume their importance, and, in the faith which gave them being, in the grand principles which surround, in the elevated sentiments which animate them, we shall easily discover the traces of divine inspiration. In rightly searching, we shall also discover a number of things profitable for ourselves.

These are incontestable and clear principles, based upon an examination of the writings, that is to say, upon facts. Righly applied, they bring to the ground the apparently specious objections against our holy books, and the facility with which they cause the obscurities to disappear is not a small proof in their favor. This is the inspiration which the holy books themselves reveal to us, which the first church had learned, which the

pious and enlightened theologians of the same time have explained, and which sacred criticism has adopted and proved. If we withdraw in any degree from this point of view, by attributing to the expression, "Word of God," a more absolute or less comprehensive signification, we shall equally and necessarily fall into difficulties and contradictions even, from which it will not be easy to withdraw. Thus when any one has denied these principles, he has always acted as if he admitted them; the writings of those who call them in question are a proof of this.

It is more common with those who do not dare exactly to deny them, to refuse to recognise them, through fear of their abuse. Indeed, abuse is easy, and it has been very great. With these three principles, we will not deny, endeavors have been made, by turns, to destroy all the doctrines of the gospel, and finally to suppress the revelation. This, however, is no reason for throwing ourselves into the opposite extreme, and, surrounding this revelation with obscurities, and removing its character of universality and truth, making it, in fact, otherwise than it is. Let us admit the principles, since they are important and incontestable, but let us prevent their abuse. We cannot yield without passing limits which ought to be well defined, since we find truth on one side and falsehood on the other. Let us seek these limits; let us join

them to the principles, and never permit them to be separated. Now these limits are easy to be discovered. They flow from the same source with the revelation. God has supernaturally intervened to declare them to man, and has caused the knowledge of them to be deposited in our holy book. This is the fact; let us contemplate the consequences. As a divine and supernatural work cannot fail in its design, we shall certainly find in our holy books the work and the will of God, and we can seek them with confidence, without fear that they will lead us astray. Whatever, then, they may possess, which is temporal, imperfect, and human, can relate only to the form; the foundation, the design, the ideas, are divine. Let us remember, then, that God was with these writers, that he lent his assistance to these books, and that his thoughts are there contained, and that when God speaks, it is necessary to believe and obey. We shall not perhaps always understand the reasonings in the metaphors of the sacred authors, but we shall see well enough when they teach or when they command. Our task, then, consists in seeking with sincerity of heart, what was the faith which they sought to establish or diffuse, for this faith ought to be our own. Our way is easy and marked; our limits are known; what then have we to fear from the principles in question, when

once thus circumscribed? What objection, at least, can be raised against their evidence?

Let us not be deceived; it is not in reality by these principles that certain theologians have been led into error. If they had been convinced, in their consciences, that the revelation was divine, and that God had supernaturally interposed in its promulgation, I doubt very much whether these principles would have appeared to them to lead to the same consequences. It is evident that they did not possess this conviction, and the principles were only a pretext. We have a proof of this in their writings.

From these developments, certain practical consequences result, upon the manner of reading the New Testament.

We ought to give but little time, and place but little importance upon the explanation of obscure passages.

There are, in our holy books, obscurities caused by the individuality and position of the authors, and that of the readers for whom these books were immediately designed. But these obscurities are of little importance. All that relates to the design, can be comprehended without difficulty. All that is universal, and calculated to touch the heart, direct the conduct, and establish the faith, is clear, positive, and, above all, frequently repeated. It is this which ought to be cherished in preference.

Does not the faithful reader often spend much

time in vain, in endeavoring to pierce an obscurity of detail, or explain, often very unsatisfactorily, an allusion to the history or the manners of the times, by consulting upon this subject commentators and books, which mislead as often as they aid? Their time would have been, almost always, better employed in meditating upon the remainder, and applying it to practice. You read the sermon of Jesus upon the mount, and the words *Raca* and *Mora* embarrass you. The severity of the anathemas pronounced against the injurious* words, astonishes you. Why do you stop to unravel the obscurities? You are ignorant of the cause, and those who explain them to you with the greatest clearness, can, after all, know but little more. There is, undoubtedly, an allusion to the manners of the Jews, and the allusion cannot be understood by us. This, however, is of little importance. There is that which interests us more. Have you meditated upon, have you considered the remainder of the chapter? These words: "Blessed are they that mourn, blessed are the peace makers, blessed are the merciful," and many others, are they retained in your hearts? Do you love your enemies? Are you persuaded, subdued, converted? This is what is essential and necessary to be known. It is, then, the clear, and not the obscure, that the pious reader should love to contemplate, and to which he should learn to conform his life.

* Matthew, v. 22.

Consider, also, the idea rather than the form. Seek the design in preference to weighing and pondering the expression. Study the expression rather than the terms. In the passage which we have just considered, the obscurities relate to the letter of the precept and its accidental form, but the spirit is plain, the design of the sentence is certain; all Christians condemn anger and hate. Understand this spirit, and the lesson sought will not be less strong for you, although it may be accompanied by some obscure words. In order to discover with the more certainty the general spirit and purpose of each lesson, do not isolate it; endeavor to discover, if, in that which precedes or follows, there may not be something which will determine its meaning. Undoubtedly, in our holy books, all parts are not thus closely connected; the sermon on the mount, for example, is composed of detached sentences, but in the other discourses of our Lord, and in most of the epistles, it is very important to study the context. Rarely are the passages presented as the articles of a code, by separate propositions. The meaning is usually in the spirit of the author, in his design, in the course of his argument, in the paragraph, or in the entire chapter, and it is there above all that it should be sought.

There is also some advantage to be derived in comparing the passages to be explained with par-

allel passages, for the frequency of the precepts is evidently a proof of importance, and a source of clearness. But this method is particularly liable to abuse, and if we neglect to join a strict examination of the context with the compared fragments, it almost invariably misleads; so easy is it to be mistaken as to the meaning of a phrase when removed from its proper place. We isolate it, and then endeavor to bring it into reconciliation with other phrases written often upon another occasion, for other men, in another age, and for a different end. We neglect these essential differences, although but little apparent and often unknown to the reader, and attach ourselves exclusively to some resemblances in the words or turns of expression, and from thence conclude that the meaning is identical. Are we not with certainty exposing ourselves to error? And this method has also so much the more danger, as its attraction is the greater; the apparent and sudden perspicuity which it spreads over obscure passages, the unforeseen and curious results which it seems to obtain almost without labor, exercise a singular seduction upon minds desirous of clear ideas, and distinct knowledge in religion; but, indeed, nothing is more easy than thus to turn the scripture into all significations; it is in this manner that we can be always armed for all opinions and all parties. The faithful reader should recur to these numerous and

parallel comparisons or references, with the diffidence and precautions which every pious and sensible critic employs. If we believe that the sacred writings were inspired by God, let us remember lest we make them say that which they have not said, and let us carefully seek their true intention, by studying each of their words by itself and in its place.

SECTION SECOND.

ERRORS FROM THE NATURE OF THE LANGUAGE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THE design of this section is entirely united with that of the preceding, and the consequences, in some respects, are the same.

The New Testament is written in a dead, and also in an ancient and popular language.

It is written in a dead language, and we cannot think sufficiently upon the consequences of this fact. It has been said that every dead language cannot be translated; and this assertion, undoubtedly false, if we limit ourselves in seeking for the principal idea of the ancient text, becomes true if we wish to express its varied shades. We render the words; yet cannot always understand them, without a lingering uncertainty as to their signification or office; and the character of the style, the

delicacy of the sentiment, the effect of the figures, and precise shades of expression cannot be rendered. Undoubtedly there is, in the holy word, such a concentration of warmth and light, that its influence is perceived, and its brilliancy manifested through every obscurity; the most imperfect translation is useful in instructing and reforming, for it yet transmits, with a dazzling clearness, the will of God and the lessons of the Saviour; the nobleness of the teachings is too intimately allied to their sublime nature, for an imperfect version to cause this trait of their divinity to disappear, but in the details how many of the more delicate tokens are effaced, how many images changed and beauties disguised! Moreover, could it be possible to present to modern readers an exact counterpart of a work such as the New Testament, there would yet be wanting those intellectual and natural habits, which, in reality, modify the impression produced by the metaphors or common proverbs, those habits, which, in fact, change the signification of the language. All these imperfections and difficulties which the reader has to encounter, do not prevent him from recognising, loving, and admiring the holy word, but they are an obstacle to its true appreciation, and sometimes also to its right interpretation; they spread obscurities and blemishes over its sublime and pure simplicity; they call up, perhaps, criticism and doubt, upon that which ought to have

excited only admiration and love. This is a source of objections which it is necessary to bear in mind.

The New Testament is in an ancient language. From hence arise, also, many other inevitable obscurities, at which we have no right in being astonished. Every book makes more or less allusions to the manners, history, and laws of the time when it was composed. This book is, moreover, simple and popular, and contains numerous allusions. How is it possible that all these should be explained with our imperfect knowledge of antiquity. Those even which have been explained with certainty by the learned, are not more clear for the multitude. We have then reason for regretting our ignorance, but more for attributing the errors to the holy book.

The New Testament is also in a popular language. When Jesus Christ declared that he had come to preach the gospel to the poor; when he thanked his Father that he had revealed it unto children, it was likely that he wished to unfold that revelation in a language adapted to their capacity, and have it thus explained by his apostles, who had themselves gone forth from the ranks of the poor and humble.

The New Testament is, therefore, eminently in a popular language, or, in other words, it is simple, vivid, figurative, full of maxims and parables, addressed to the heart rather than to the mind, and is, consequently, less precise,

less exact, less rigorous than the language of science. We should not be astonished, therefore, in discovering vague expressions, and images more poetical than exact. Among those things which compose the language of the heart, are the words which gifted men speak to a passionate multitude, and inspired men address to sinners. Let us receive the scripture as it has been given to us, we shall then understand it; we shall do better, we shall feel its truths, for we also are men, and our heart has more need of being persuaded than our mind convinced. It is thus, that just ideas upon the nature of the language of the New Testament, will dissipate many obscurities, and, at the same time, will prevent many objections. They will also in another manner add to the utility of the holy book, by their consequences upon the methods of interpretation, which, in passing, I ought to mention.

The first, much too often forgotten, appear to me very important. Theology has extracted from the holy books a great number of striking and significant terms, which are used to express fundamental ideas. It has determined and defined them. As a science, it was its duty so to do. But we cannot take the Bible for a treatise on theology, the language of the apostles for that of learned men, and the public places where Jesus pardoned sins, for the benches of a school. The error would be

great. The language of the authors of the New Testament was popular, that of the theologians is scientific, and the words which have, and ought, perhaps, to have the exactness of science, have a signification necessarily more enlarged and varied in the mouth of the apostles. I appeal, for a corroboration of this assertion, to every sincere and enlightened critic; he will be convinced that in the New Testament many terms of this kind have a variable meaning, more or less extended, determinate, and dogmatical, according to the passage and occasion. As, for example, the words charity, faith, works, law, justice, spirit, safety, &c. When we read the New Testament, let us be careful to apply to them their theological and exact signification, and instead of seeking in a theological dictionary the particular meaning of a certain word in a certain passage, let us above all seek it in the passage itself, in its context, and in its spirit.

The second consequence flows immediately from the preceding section. It will not do to press the words too closely for fear of error. These words have been translated from a dead language, and sometimes contain an allusion to unknown customs, or perhaps enclose a figure. It is the general idea of which they are the expression, and which it is especially necessary to seek. In a comparison or simile, instead of urging the details, it is necessary to adhere closely to the spirit and precept. All is

error in the opposite method, and the imagination of the interpreter is substituted by the action, for the thought of God. Through respect for the holy books, moreover, let us fear lest we cause them to say that which we are so little sure that they have, in reality, said. The more we adhere to a particular detail, and to an isolated fact, the more do we run the risk of encountering error. The more we adhere to the general spirit, to the best idea of the passage, discourse, or figure, the more certain is it that we are in the right, and that we have seized the divine thought. It is by enlarging the base of the pyramid that we give to it solidity and grandeur. The requisite quality, then, for rightly interpreting the scripture, is not a subtile and ingenious spirit, but a sincere and subdued heart, joined to a judicious and clear mind. Let us labor to acquire both, and let us feel a greater interest in understanding the scripture, in explaining it, and, above all, in profiting by it than in exercising ourselves in analysing phrases and discovering, under each word, a new idea or mystery.

SECTION THIRD.

ERRORS CONCERNING THE DESIGN OF THE LESSONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

It is too common, especially in times of religious discussion, to forget the true design of the scrip-

tures, and thus deceive ourselves as to the effect it ought to produce.

The scriptures do not labor to make us learned, but to convert, sanctify and save us. To be a Christian and to be a learned man, do not imply the same thing, nor are the terms, religion and theology, synonymous. It is undoubtedly necessary that there should be theologians; and it is important that they should be learned and laborious men. God forbid that after their having always maintained the science, I should now endeavor to separate them from it, but it is not to them that these things are especially addressed, it is still more important, that all the members of the church should be religious. I shall not inquire here even to what extent it is proper for these to study theology; in every case, that which is certain and important, which is essential to be frequently and vigorously studied, in order to understand the views of the Creator, should not be sought by the faithful in the works of theologians, but in the scriptures themselves. I have no desire to deny or restrain the right and duty of examination; but this duty or right does not alter the spirit of the Bible or the disposition necessary to a right understanding of its meaning — a disposition which renders them on the contrary more important. Now the Bible demands obedience and not learning, love and not inquisitiveness. Let us not place devotion in for-

mulas, and the gospel in theological theses, this would be the means of destroying at once both the signification and the good results. Jesus did not die to create dissertations, but to save souls. Let his disciples seek in his word opinions rather than theories. Let the Christian in opening the Book of books, commence by saying; God himself deigns to instruct and guide me, his precepts ought then to enter my heart, regulate my conduct and make me a new man. This is the view, in which and by which, we ought to understand the Bible. It is this which teaches us to observe and discover with gratitude and conviction, the admirable conformity of the scripture with our secret and intimate works. Studied in this manner, it exercises its true influence, and is proved even by its efficacy. It is when the word of God sanctifies the soul, that it is, above all things, the truth. Placed without this point of view, we make it otherwise than it is; the wonderful harmony which exists between it and ourselves is destroyed, and from thence come shadows, mistakes, errors, and finally, objections and doubts.

I terminate this section and work, by some reflections designed to confirm this truth.

I have said that the scripture tended to produce a powerful effect upon the heart, rather than to frame in the mind a system of theology. This is indeed so evident that it is needless to stop a long time to prove the assertion. What chapter in the

New Testament does not speak directly to the heart, and place the essential principles of religion, in love and obedience, or in faith, composed of the most complete obedience and devoted love. Let us examine in particular the discourses of Jesus Christ. These discourses are such, that their beauty, clearness, and efficacy, possess, in a special manner, the point of view in question. In Matthew and Luke we find energetic and striking precepts which are calculated to move the heart, and make a decisive impression upon the multitude, but which do not admit of being examined letter by letter.* He who reads them with an open and subdued heart is improved, enlightened, changed. He has received a strong, useful, and truly divine impression, such as answers exactly to the nature of man, and to his social and individual wants. The seed has fallen upon good soil, and the word has brought forth its fruit. But, on the contrary, he who reads the lessons of Jesus only to discuss the signification, to measure the language, and weigh the words, runs the risk of misundestanding the spirit and design. When Jesus spoke to the Jews, to what faculties of their soul did he especially address himself, and what dispositions did he demand in them? What dispositions, consequently, does he demand of us, in

* Matt., v. 22, 29, 30, 34, 37, 39—41, 48; vi. 3, 17, 31, 32, &c.

order that we may rightly understand his precepts and ideas?

Let us bless God in having demanded for the efficacy of His word, rectitude and sensibility rather than knowledge. If this had been necessary, the fruits of this word would have been, like most earthly benefits, the heritage of a few. But it demands above everything else, docility of heart, and immediately it becomes the treasure of the poor and the humble, as much or even more than that of the rich and learned. All are able to acquire an honest and good heart, but to study, analyze, and explain, there is required a learning and knowledge which a great majority of mankind do not enjoy.

Let us, moreover, remark, how this spirit of submission gives the true key of scripture, and causes all objections to disappear. We are not able, with our limited understanding, to establish a complete theological system. There will always remain obscurities and things difficult to be reconciled, because they concern the infinite, and we behold only a part. The truly enlightened theologian often says, if he be honest, "I do not know." These obscurities astonish and even vex men more curious than pious, who wish to class all in chapters and arrange in syllogisms. But if we take the Christian view, and study the scriptures in order to apply them to the conduct and the life, all is instantly clear, harmony re-appears, contradictions

are removed, the heart receives a single impression, and all the teachings and truths are in agreement to sanctify and change. Paul promises salvation by faith, and James by works; the theologians endeavor to reconcile them, and undoubtedly it is not difficult, and a reader who is not a theologian, may indeed be startled at this apparent contradiction. But instead of discussing the theory, let him put in practice that which is commanded him as the apostles have ordained, and nothing is more easy, and the two lessons united, instead of contradicting, afford mutual aid. Will the living faith of the one be, by any chance, useles to the spotless religion of the other? And he who believes that Jesus Christ "was delivered for our offences and raised for our justification,"* will he not have a greater resolution and zeal, "to visit the fatherless, and widows in their affliction, and keep himself unspotted from the world?"† And, on the other hand, will not charity, in transporting into a divine atmosphere his thoughts, his affections, and his wishes, cause him to love and seek in faith the divine model which he has already imitated, and to whose laws he is subjected?

This is a demonstration, indeed, as persuasive as sublime, of the divinity of our book. Theory does not always permit itself completely and easily to understand, but the proof is always clear, always

* Romans, iv. 24, 25. † James, i. 27.

in agreement with itself, always in perfect accordance with the depths of the human heart, and abounding in fruits of peace and life. If the scriptures had been the work of man, it would have been otherwise. The theory would have been so well arranged, that nothing would have failed. All would have seemed plain, reasonable, proved. But experience would have contradicted the system, the machinery would have worked badly, fatal and unforeseen consequences would everywhere have sprung forth, and the hearts of the ignorant and unhappy, would have in vain demanded peace and repose. For thus have terminated all philosophies and systems of morals up to the present, which have not been based upon the gospel.

Happy, then, the Christian, who joins to an entire conviction of the celestial origin of the New Testament, the honest, and good heart, alone capable of understanding its teachings, and capable of placing its precepts in practice. He alone knows how to read the "law of the Eternal," and meditate upon it with joy, by night and by day, continually approaching nearer to God, "the Father of light," and the Father of all perfection. In this holy exercise, his intelligence and his love are unitedly developed. His faith, moreover, enlarges and extends, for it thrusts its roots deep into the appropriate soil, and near the running waters

designed to nourish it. It will yield its fruit in time of need, and in every season its shade will afford refreshment and safety. This faith could only languish in the midst of discussions and theories; the words of man could have furnished it only a feeble aliment and imperfect moisture; but in a diligent and sensible reader of the word of God, it draws a vigor and a new prosperity from those touching and intimate beauties, those secret harmonies, those discoveries of the heart, those convictions of sentiment and experience, even more persuasive than the demonstrations and testimony of history.

"If any man will do His will, says our Lord, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."*

* John, vii. 17.

APPENDIX.

THE GOSPEL HISTORY.

"Read, read the gospels, and then ask yourselves if they are the work of an impostor."—Page 10.

The following excellent remarks, by Mr Furness, will undoubtedly be read with great interest, by those who may not have met with them before:

"In works upon the Evidences of Christianity, the question commonly discussed concerning the four gospels is, 'Were they written by the persons whose names they bear?' as if the settlement of this point were the strongest possible confirmation of our faith. But, I confess, all that I can learn of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, does not give me so lively a confidence in the authors of these histories as is created in me by the histories themselves. To say merely that they are honest and impartial, appears to me most inadequate praise. By studying them in the manner which I have now attempted, I find my conceptions of the honest, the true, the candid, enlarged and enlightened. The character of Jesus is not more truly a revelation of moral greatness, than these wonderful writings are, in their style and structure, of the quality of truth. That this is strong language I am aware; and perhaps there is little in the foregoing pages that seems to justify it. Still I do not wholly despair of having given the candid and intelligent reader some idea of the grounds upon which rests the conviction I have already expressed, that nowhere in the writings of the dead, or

in the characters of the living, do I discern evidences of integrity and singleness of mind so luminous and affecting as those presented in the four gospels.

"I beg the reader to pause for one moment, and consider the character of the events which constitute the sum and substance of these narratives. How tremendously exciting they must have been! The blind seeing, the lame walking, the dead raised, the wretched and the profligate collected in crowds, listening to words of mercy and hope, multitudes thronging the highways bringing their sick, and pressing upon one another like the billows of a heaving sea! If Jesus of Nazareth spoke and acted and suffered as he is here represented, how must the minds of men have boiled around him! How closely and with what power must he have approached their passions, prejudices, sentiments! How must he, as with a giant's hand, have broken up all the fountains of wonder and fear and awe and hope, and made all hearts overflow with one or another passion!

"Could you have been present, and by some strong philosophic effort, could you have torn off your attention from the absorbing interest of those scenes, and asked yourself the simple question, how can any idea of these things ever be communicated to those who do not see them, you would have exclaimed at once and aloud, 'It is impossible!' You might have glanced around upon those eager multitudes, but where would you have discovered a single calm observer? Where would you have seen a single eye that was not like a burning coal, a single bosom that was not heaving in tumultuous and overpowering sympathy with the unprecedented spectacle? You would indeed have seen One there, all calm and collected, the producer of all this emotion; but the dovelike serenity of his demeanor would only have tended to deepen in your eyes the mystery and excitement of the scene. I repeat it, you would have felt that it was impossible that any accounts could ever be given of events so exciting, save such as were wretchedly inadequate, or so colored and exaggerated as to convey no just conception of the truth. When we witness anything that stirs up our feelings — any uncommon burst of eloquence for instance — we either give up in despair every attempt to describe what

we have witnessed, or, in the attempt to describe it, the reality is most sadly marred and dwarfed, and we take that single step which separates the sublime from the ridiculous.

"Look now at the accounts which have come down to us of the wonderful words, works, and sufferings of that unrivalled being who appeared some ages since in Judea. Perhaps they give us but a faint idea of the strange and stirring events of which they treat, and with all our efforts, our impressions, in distinctness and intensity, must fall far, very far short of those which were made upon the actual witnesses of the life of Jesus. The power of language was not equal to so great a subject. Still from these records, such as they are, we derive ideas of moral beauty and greatness, to which no page in the world's history furnishes anything that we can compare. An instance of moral life is disclosed to us which stands alone and unapproached in its wholeness and symmetry. At the same time abundant evidence is afforded in the course of these narratives, that all around Jesus, were more or less the creatures of feeling, ignorance, and prejudice, fettered by superstition, beguiled by coarse hopes and dreams of outward splendor. Who were they—our curiosity is immediately aroused to ask,—who were they that, among those excitable and excited crowds, were able to observe so calmly, and report so correctly; to look on and listen with eyes and ears and hearts so true, that, with a slight effort, we are able, in some few instances at least, to feel almost as if we were present on the spot, and the things related were passing visibly before us? To this question there is only one answer. *The character of Jesus must have created his biographers.* Whoever they were, whatever were their names, they must have been persons who by intimate association with him had imbibed some measure of his spirit, and that spirit, calm and true, had wrought upon their minds, to subdue the tumults of feeling, to chasten their imaginations, to subordinate their sensibility to the Wonderful, to their sensibility to the True, in fine, to qualify them to see and hear aright, and to impart what they saw and heard. Upon examination we find throughout these writings, the most touching indications of precisely that calm and elevated tone of mind and feeling which association with such an one as Jesus was fitted to produce. In

their unguardedness, in their unsuspecting simplicity, in their pervading unconsciousness, we see that these authors had completely lost themselves, lost all anxiety about effect, every disposition to embellish, in the abiding and absorbing sense of truth. The facts—facts of which they had such full knowledge,—filled their minds to the exclusion of all self-reference, all fears and misgivings. They tell right on what they know, taking no credit to themselves, and unconscious that there can be anything meritorious in a faithful relation of what so entirely possesses their minds. To the authors of the gospels, so far as they are disclosed in their writings, may be applied the language of Wordsworth in his Ode to Duty:

> "There are, who ask not if thine eye
> Be on them, who in love and truth
> Where no misgiving is, rely
> Upon the genial sense of youth;
> Glad hearts! without reproach or blot,
> *Who do thy work and know it not.*"

Not indeed "upon the genial sense of youth" did the evangelists rely, but upon a kindred spirit. Between him and the young, of whom he said, "of such is the kingdom of heaven," there was the greatest congeniality. His spirit had gradually infused itself into the mind of these writers, until it became as their life-blood, unconsciously animating all their thoughts, inspiring their words, and producing in them the simplicity, the "unchartered freedom" of childhood. It cost them no effort to tell the truth. They could as well have ceased to breathe, as ceased to tell it, let the objections and difficulties it created be what they might. Their reverence for Jesus was so great, their confidence in him so entire, that they never appear to have thought that the most imperfect representation of any part of his conduct was not enough—that he could ever need to be indebted to their pens to save him from being misunderstood. With the poet just quoted, they seem to have thought that their theme

> "——— might demand a seraph's tongue,
> Were it not equal to its own support;
> And therefore no incompetence of *theirs*
> Could do it wrong."*

* The Excursion. Book 8.

Accordingly they never think of explaining or setting off anything they relate concerning him. Thus they show how genuine was their love of their master. This love it was which was their "unerring light," their security against every false bias, enabling them to see what they saw so nearly at the true point of view."

VARIATIONS.

"These differences critics call *variations* or *readings*. More than thirty thousand have been recorded."—Page 124.

The variations in the text of the New Testament are placed by our author at thirty thousand, and other authorities have stated the number at one hundred and thirty thousand. But when it is remembered that for thirteen hundred years the Testament was preserved in manuscript, and that all the copies were transcribed in writing, and were translated into many languages, this large amount of different readings should not surprise us. All ancient books have been exposed to similar errors, from a like cause, and we can examine no ancient classic, without discovering numerous variations in the reading of various copies. Of the variations in the works of Terence, Dr Bentley remarks: "I, myself, have collated several, and do affirm, that I have seen twenty thousand various lections in that little author, and am morally sure, that if half the number of manuscripts were collated for Terence, with that niceness and minuteness which has been used in twice as many for the New Testament, the number of the various readings would amount to above fifty thousand." This same author also states, that the variations in the poet Manlius are twice as many as the lines.

The New Testament, then, does not stand alone with its numerous readings. To those unaccustomed, however, to reflect upon this subject, the immense number of these variations may appear extraordinary. In order to account for them, we must remember under what circumstances the book has been transmitted to our day. The original manuscripts have long since disappeared. The oldest manuscripts now extant, are copies

of copies, and the others, are copies taken from copies down to the invention of printing. During a portion of this period, the Christian religion was making rapid progress. Copies of the New Testament must, consequently, have been in great demand, and were therefore probably written in haste, and by those who were not well qualified to undertake the task. Under such circumstances, how many slight errors must have been made. We all know that in writing a letter, or copying a printed passage from a book, every one is continually making slight mistakes. Sometimes a word is omitted, or repeated twice, and sometimes a word of a similar signification is substituted for the one employed. Thus it is in the various manuscripts of the New Testament, but in order to swell the amount of variations to the number which has been recorded, slighter mistakes than these were noticed. Even the omission to dot an *i*, or cross a *t*, were not passed.

Alterations in the division of the various parts of the Testament were made at different times, and from hence, also, have arisen many of these errors. Originally there were no separations of the text into chapters and verses, or even into words. The letters of ancient books were all united, so that from the beginning to the end, there was no division into words; the book was, as it were, one combined word. The invention of our present chapters, was by Cardinal Hugo, about the year 1240. And the plan of distinguishing the verses by figures, was accomplished for the New Testament, by Robert Stephens, a French printer, about the year 1580.

From these continual copyings and changes, then, have arisen these errors. But these are all unimportant; so much so, that it is said, "that even in the worst manuscript now extant, not one article of faith or moral precept is either perverted or lost by it." Perhaps some of my young readers may ask, whether, since the introduction of the present text of the New Testament, other manuscripts have not been examined, so as to present to the world a better reading of some passages than the common version now gives? This is undoubtedly the case. In no period of the world's history, has the text of the New Testament been more carefully or laboriously examined than in the present.

Scholars have devoted their whole lives to the subject, and while their labors convince us, that no material change of the text of the received version can take place, yet we know that in some few passages another reading might be substituted. It is not probable, however, that these new readings will be introduced very quickly, nor is it important, since they are known and recorded, and can be read and examined by the whole world. The importance of a change is also diminished, by the real value which they possess being inconsiderable. Were it otherwise, the whole Christian world would undoubtedly demand another version. But as this is not the case, and as many honest and sincere Christians attach an almost sacred regard to the present text, and would look upon its alteration as a work of sacrilege, it will probably continue to be used by the present generation. The time, however, will undoubtedly come, when another version will be substituted.

The text which at the present day presents the purest reading of the New Testament, is that of Prof. Griesbach. It has been prepared with immense labor, about four hundred manuscripts having been examined and collated, in order to arrive at the true and original words of the text, as they were written by the apostles. This great labor has, however, not been bestowed in vain. All denominations of Christians acknowledge its claims to their regard, and confess that there is no doubt as to its being more pure than the commonly received version. Nor should we be surpised at this, for when we are acquainted with the history of the present text, we instantly perceive that it can have no peculiar claim, excepting its antiquity, to our respect. The present Greek text was adopted from the edition of Elzevir, the printer, principally on account of the beauty of its execution. It was formed, with some amendments, from the preceding editions of the New Testament which had been edited by Erasmus and Beza, and these distinguished men, in their preparation for the important task, had examined about twenty manuscripts only. In order, however, that the readers of this work may be able to behold for themselves the wonderful purity of the texts of the gospels, I have quoted from the work of Prof. Norton, a few of the variations from the received text, which have been

adopted by Griesbach, and are considered the most important In some cases the change is expressed in English. Where th Greek is used, a corresponding change in the translation is im possible, on account of the variation being so trifling.

	Received Text.	*Variations by Griesback.*
Ch. i. *v.* 1.	Δαβὶδ	Δαυὶδ } the name of David and Solomon differently spelt.
6.	Σολομῶντα	Σολομῶνα }
18.	Jesus.	perhaps to be omitted.
19.	to expose to shame.	to expose.
Ch. ii. *v.* 8.	*carefully search out.*	perhaps search out carefully.
11.	they found.	they saw.
17.	υπο	perhaps διὰ
22.	επὶ	perhaps to be omitted.
Ch. iv. *v.* 4.	a man.	perhaps man.
5.	sets.	perhaps set.
10.	go from me Satan.	go behind me Satan.
18.	Jesus.	omitted.
Ch. v. *v.* 28.	αὐτῆς	probably αὐτῆν
47.	brethren.	perhaps friends.
	publicans.	Gentiles.
	do thus.	do the same.
Ch. vi. *v.* 21.	your treasure.	thy treasure.
	your heart.	thy heart.
24.	μαμμῶνᾳ	μαμῶνᾳ
34.	τα	omitted.
Ch. vii. *v.* 9.	ἐστιν	omitted.
14.	Ὅτι	Τι
Ch. viii. *v.* 8.	λόγον	λόγω
28.	Gergesenes.	Gerasenes.
31.	suffer us to go.	send us.

Such are some of the most important variations.

With regard to the present translation of the Bible, it is probably as perfect a version as was ever made by man. It was made, as is well known, by order of James I., at the commencement of the seventeenth century. The king appointed fiftyfour learned and faithful men to perform the work. They were divided into six companies, and to each company was assigned a particular portion of the Bible, which was to be trans ated by

each individual. The portions thus translated, were sent to the other companies, to be again thoroughly examined by them. The whole Bible was in this manner subjected to the scrutiny of all the translators. Three entire copies of the work, were then placed in the hands of a committee of six, who examined, revised, and corrected it for general use. Three years were spent in performing the task.

JAMES THE LESS.

"We know but little concerning the history of the author of this epistle. James, *brother of the Lord*, is probably the same as James, the son of Alpheus."—Page 165.

In the early history of the church, considerable discussion took place, in order to discover and settle the exact relationship between James and our Saviour. In the gospel of Mark, we learn that his mother's name was Mary. "Mary, the mother of James the less and of Joses." And in John she is thus mentioned: "There stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, *and his mother's sister, Mary, the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.*" From Matthew we learn that "James was the son of Alpheus. (Alpheus being the Greek pronunciation of the Hebrew name, Cleophas.) Combining therefore, these various passages, we infer, that James was the son of the sister of Mary Magdalene, or the cousin of Jesus. The term *brother*, was often applied by the Hebrews to near relations; thus in Genesis, Abraham and Lot, who were only cousins, are called brothers. But little information can be derived from the gospels concerning James; in the Acts of the Apostles he is frequently and honorably mentioned. He resided at Jerusalem, and was the bishop of its church. He appears also to have been at the head of the Jewish Christians, and was, therefore, favorably inclined to the observance of the ceremonial law. He, however, did not consider it necessary, for at the council of Jerusalem, which was held in the year 49 or 50, and where he was the presiding officer, he decided that the Gentiles should be received into the church

upon their conversion, without being required to have its rites administered upon them. He was much beloved by the Jews, and for his integrity obtained the name of The Just. He suffered martyrdom, being stoned to death, about the year 62.

The epistle which bears his name was early read in the churches, and is mentioned by Eusebeus, Clement, and Irenæus as a genuine epistle.

JUDE.

"Moreover, notwithstanding its extreme brevity, it has been quoted by numerous learned men among the church."—Page 193.

There are two Judes mentioned in the New Testament, "Judas the brother of James," and Judas Iscariot. The former is called by Mark, Thaddeus, which surname is added, to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot. This Judas had his surname from Carioth, his birth-place. Jude is an English abbreviation of Judas. It means, "the praise of the Lord." But little is said concerning Jude, the author of the epistle. And it is not known whether he died a natural death or suffered martyrdom. It is supposed, by some writers, that he travelled into Persia, and was put to death by the magi. He was probably a husbandman. The authenticity of his epistle has been called in question, but without any good reason. It was known in the first century, and was quoted by Clement, of Alexandria, who flourished about the year 194.

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